
1. Great Britain Wild Water Racing - Coaching

Athlete Assessment Guidance

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22/02/2006	0.2	Alan Tordoff	Add reference to delegated assessor
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12/06/2007	1.2	Alan Tordoff	Expanded Athlete Risk assessment section.
15/04/2010	1.3	Alan Tordoff	Clarified Injury or illness is covered by Risk Assessment
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1 Purpose

This guidance offers advice to assessors who are delegated to assess an athlete's suitability for selection for representative teams. Further advice and guidance is freely available from the assessment controller, team management and national coaches should it be required.

2 Event and Venue Assessment

A target event and its venue will be assessed for performance and safety requirements. These assessments will be published to allow suitable grading of athletes to be made for the target event and venue.

2.1 Performance

The performance level required for the target event will be designated by the WWR committee in consultation with the team manager and national team coach. The performance designation is important as it allows limited team resources to be focussed on athletes who are most likely to achieve the objectives of a team travelling to an event. It will be designated as one of the following:

1. High – Athletes should demonstrate a commitment to perform at their best. Achievement of high results is expected – as a guide, to finish in the Top Half in MK1 or equivalent % down on winner in other classes.
2. Moderate - Athletes should demonstrate a commitment to perform well. Achievement of good results is expected, although latitude is given to wider objectives such as, but not limited to, gaining international experience – as a guide, to finish in the Top Two Thirds in MK1 or equivalent % down on winner in other classes.
3. Developing - Athletes should demonstrate a commitment to perform at an international standard and show the desire to improve. Achievement of good results is not the primary aim but wider objectives such as improving skills and experience is expected. Achievement of adequate international standard results is expected – as a guide, to finish within 10% of the class winner's time.

2.2 Risk

The risk level of the target venue will be designated by the WWR committee in consultation with the assessment controller and others who may have been to the venue. This is a measure of difficulty and safety of the target venue and will be a guide to the competence level an athlete will require. It will be designated as one of the following:

1. High - The venue may cause capsize. In cases of capsize, risk of loss or damage to equipment is likely and risk of personal injury is possible, Paddlers wishing to attend a high-risk event will need to have a competence assessment of High.
2. Moderate - The venue may cause capsize. In cases of capsize, risk of loss or damage to equipment is possible though risk of personal injury is unlikely. Paddlers wishing to attend a Moderate risk event will need to have a competence assessment of Moderate or above.
3. Low – The venue is unlikely to cause capsize. Risk of loss or damage to equipment is low and risk of personal injury is unlikely. Paddlers wishing to attend a Low risk event competition will need to have a competence assessment of Developing or above.

Note that risk levels may be mitigated by rescue cover provided by the venue or team resources. This will already be incorporated into the designation.

2.3 Selection Event

If a selection event is being used to determine selection, the venue of the selection event will be chosen to try and reflect the designations of the target event and venue. This would allow the selection event itself to act as a good 'assessment' of both performance and competence. However, it has to be accepted that this may not always be possible thereby requiring the need for an athlete assessment.

3 Athlete Assessment

As an assessor, you must assess an athlete against the both the performance and risk levels designated for the target event and venue. Although assessments for one class or crew combination will give an idea about ability, paddlers or different crew combinations should be assessed separately for each class or combination. The document Assessment record template should be used as a guide to assist assessors and athletes as to what is expected and how assessments are performed.

3.1 Performance

The measure of commitment is equally important as expectation of results and should be part of your assessment. A high result would generally be regarded as finishing in the top half of the competition in MK1. In other classes it would generally be regarded as finishing at or within the % behind the winner that the top half position in MK1 attains. This is to recognise that there is often less spread of performance in the Canadian and LK1 classes meaning that making the top half requires a better percentage down on the winner. A moderate result would generally be regarded as finishing in the top 2/3rds of the competition in MK1. In other classes it would generally be regarded as finishing at or within the % behind the winner that the 2/3s position in MK1 attains. This is to recognise that there is often less spread of performance in the Canadian and LK1 classes meaning that making the top 2/3rds requires a better percentage down on the winner. Note this is not simply a test of flatwater speed. To achieve a good result in a wild water race requires a combination of speed, whitewater skills, psychology, racing strategy etc.

Where the target event includes a team race, an athlete's contribution to a team race may provide some latitude on performance, but you should refer to the WWR committee, assessment controller, team management and national coaches for advice on this. It may also be possible to provide latitude on performance so that at least 1 boat from each class may be selected, but, again, you should refer to the WWR committee, assessment controller, team management and national coaches for advice on this.

3.2 Risk Competency

This is essentially a safety assessment. An assessor will decide with an athlete (and parent if under 18) if they have the suitable skills, toughness and resilience on various grades of water with associated risks and hazards and that they are capable of individually dealing with situations when paddling/racing does not go to plan. For this reason, we strongly advise athletes not to leave their assessment until the selection race as no feedback can be given and there is no opportunity for improvements to be made. Some examples of paddler at risk issues are given below.

Note that performance and safety are not necessarily related. For Instance, an athlete may be a very slow racer, but highly competent at controlling a wild water racing boat on rough water. The athlete should be observed at both their race pace and their cruising pace as these paces should be visibly different for all athletes. Remember, however, that competence and skills required to handle a wild water racing boat are not necessarily the same as handling, say, a playboat or slalom boat.

It is accepted that from time to time athletes may have difficulty on whitewater, including the possibility of capsize. However, what is not reasonable is for such a possibility to be an expectation of an athlete. This may lead to unnecessary loss or damage to equipment and/or a risk of personal injury, not only to the athlete themselves, but to others who may have to conduct a rescue.

If an athlete has a swim, how an athlete copes is an important part of the assessment. Does the athlete, when swimming, continue to show good judgement. Do they continue to 'read' the water to swim themselves and their boat to shore? Do they know there may become a point to actually let go of equipment and swim themselves to shore to ensure their own safety?

What is also undesirable is an athlete who is overcome by fear of the water. This causes extra burden upon team resources which could be better utilised assisting other athletes to higher levels of performance. It is acknowledged that Wild Water Racing sometimes presents

a significant personal challenge, but how an athlete confronts that challenge is important. Whilst not necessarily conclusive there are a number of signs that could indicate excessive fear of the water:

- Excessive bank reconnaissance – it is good practice to look at a difficult piece of water, see other athletes executing it and carrying out visualisation. However, if done to excess or without creating improvements in later runs, this may be an indication of fear.
- Using equipment damage as an excuse – athletes should be well prepared with spare equipment and suitable repair materials. Using equipment failure as an excuse not to paddle when options to fix or replace are available may be an indication of fear.
- Complaints of injury or fatigue – such symptoms are likely to be genuinely felt by an athlete suffering stress from fear of the water. Athletes often have to deal with injury niggles and tiredness and a confident athlete would not worry about such symptoms; however, an athlete who is not confident may complain, which may be an indication of fear.
- Excessive back strokes – a WWR boat does not work effectively when going slowly. It is a naturally defensive reaction when faced with a difficult situation or an emergency steering move to occasionally use a back stroke, however continual and excessive use of back strokes may be an indication of fear.
- No improvements during practice – if an athlete is overwhelmed by fear of the water, their awareness of the river and what they are doing becomes impaired. An athlete, who is coping with the challenge of the water, will try and review their mistakes and try to gradually improve. Repeating the same mistakes continually may be an indication of fear.
- Paddlers showing any of the above signs-should be counselled during training to ascertain what the issues are (temporary or longer term). If these can be resolved this may not affect competency, if they cannot then their competency assessment may be reduced until they can demonstrate a change in their competency.

3.2.1 Injury or Illness

Unfortunately injury or illness short or long term can affect a paddlers ability to perform to maximum, have the potential to cause long term future health issues, can affect their mental state, toughness and resilience on various grades of water increase their risk on the water/capsizing and create extra burdens on team resources. Paddlers selected despite injuries or ill health issues, that do not compromise the potential they showed at selection at the time of committing to race for the GB team, are not excluded from racing for the GB team at home or abroad. However, if a paddlers health is compromised unduly (either as a result of existing ill health/injuries worsening or new ill health/injury) since selection, the paddler/their parents/coaches are obligated to advise the team manager and either withdraw from the team until this is resolved) or submit medical evidence they are fit to travel and race to their section potential at the venue(s) selected.

Paddlers with existing ill health/injury who need specific additional support outside of normal team resources MUST raise this in their selection registration and ensure they are willing and able to bring that support, at their own expense, if selected.

All paddlers are responsible for ensuring they have the correct legal medication with them when competing for GB and that they have comprehensive personal medical insurance, which fully covers them for all their existing health and injury issues and for competing and paddling at the locations selected for.

The WWR team management /Executive reserve the right to request evidence from the paddlers' qualified medical advisor (s)/consultant(s). In some circumstances there may be a requirement for independent medical advice to be sought on a paddler's medical suitability to paddle to their selection performance. This is to ensure paddler safety and the overall success of the GB team. Any costs associated with providing this evidence (including the costs of travel and costs to seek an independent medical report) are the responsibility of the paddler.

The long-term future health of an athlete is also a consideration.

3.3 Assessment Grading

Your assessment will grade the athlete against competence. Performance will normally be based on the selection race(s) results and be graded as:

1. High – Under normal circumstances the athlete will achieve high results. As a guide, finish in the Top Half in MK1 or equivalent % down on winner in other categories.
2. Moderate – Under normal circumstances the athlete will achieve good results. As a guide, finish in the Top Two Thirds in MK1 or equivalent % down on winner in other categories.
3. Developing – Under normal circumstances the athlete will demonstrate a commitment to perform at an international standard and show the desire to improve. Achievement of adequate international standard results is expected – as a guide, to finish within 10% of the category winner's time.

Performance is measured with the aid of historical data analysis; this tool is a reasonably accurate tool for predicting international performance. This will be used by the selection committee as a guide to aid with determining if an athlete meets the required performance level.

Competence will be graded as:

1. High = Proven ability to paddle and race grade 3 and above water consistently and confidently, demonstrating excellent white water and boat handling skills.
2. Moderate = Proven ability to paddle and race grade 2 –3 water consistently may have raced Grade 3 but not yet assessed as having consistent competent performance across a wide range of grade 3 water/river courses, will be able to demonstrate reasonable white water and boat handling skills shows hesitation before harder sections of white water.
3. Developing = Ability to race grade 2 water but needs more experience, shows potential to reach higher competency level.

3.4 Assessor Conflict of Interest

Assessors should be independent of the athlete they are assessing. Assessors should not assess athletes from their own club or assess paddlers they are coaching. If an assessor is considering registering for selection themselves, they should declare the fact as early as possible and should not assess athletes in the class that they intend to contend. If an athlete believes that an assessor might contend selection in the class that they are intending to register for they should bring that to the attention of the team management. Having a single assessor making an assessment decision should be avoided wherever possible.

4 Availability of Advice

Further advice is freely available from the assessment controller, national coaches and team management to help you make your assessment of an athlete.

If you feel an athlete needs to improve any aspects to allow them to be graded at a higher level, advice is available from national coaches, for the athlete or their coach, to address those aspects.

5 Reassessments

Once assessed, the performance and competence assessments will be valid for the event in the current international season only. The assessment controller may ask for re-assessment of an athlete at any time to take account of new information or change in performance level of the athlete.

An athlete/coach may also ask for re-assessment if they feel they have new evidence they would like to be considered.

Re-assessment requests are dependent on there being assessment opportunities available and are not possible after the final selection race.