

Stroke rate as a training tool for kayak athletes.

Cadence is useful in all aspects of kayak training. Some athletes are using it instead of heart rate or lactate testing to structure training intensity levels. It can help with the development of an efficient powerful technique and as a tool to fine tune performance for sprint and endurance racing. In this article I want to focus on the intermediate to advanced level athlete and the use of real time cadence feedback to help develop a powerful efficient paddling technique. Until a kayak athlete has built a base of a powerful efficient stroke there is much less to be gained from higher cadence training. For those of you who feel you are ready to up your intensity, the last part of this article will cover race pace cadence training.

So how can real time cadence feedback help you as a kayak athlete?

Every kayaker knows that if they spin their arms like a thrashing propeller and speed up their stroke rate the kayak will briefly go faster.

Every kayaker also knows that if they pump iron in the gym and get strong they can pull harder on a longer paddle and the kayak will go faster.

And of course whatever your level of fitness and strength your biggest gains will always come from improved kayak paddle technique.

So what is best? How much emphasis should be on technique? Should we be aiming for good aerobic capacity and a high stroke rate or should we spend more time in the gym building strength? The answer of course, will be a combination of all these elements and different for each individual athlete.

Until now athletes and coaches have used the tried and tested methods of lactate testing, heart rate and training intensity levels to structure and periodise training.

Cadence has been for analysis only with coaches and athletes counting strokes and working out stroke rate after the event.

Rowers, cyclists and runners have known the benefits of using cadence feedback in their training for years.

Why has cadence not been available to kayakers? Real time stroke rate feedback for kayak athletes is now possible using the Vaaka kayak cadence sensor which attaches to the paddle shaft and sends stroke rate data (cadence) to any ANT+ compatible GPS watch such as Garmin 310xt or Timex global trainer. This allows stroke rate data to be viewed alongside speed, distance and heart rate while training and racing.

It's a technology breakthrough and the first novel training tool for kayakers for many years. I hope this article will give you some alternate training ideas and show you how real time stroke rate feedback can help you achieve that subtle balance of technique, strength and fitness to improve your kayak performance.

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