

## Warm Up Routines for Paddlers

In this article we will show you some guidelines and suggestions about proper warm up for paddlers. At the end you can also find some practical ideas of warm ups we use with our athletes.

### Warm Up goals are:

- increase core body temperature
- increase blood flow to the muscles
- stimulation of the nervous system and activation of involved muscle groups
- improvement of joint mobility and flexibility
- increase in coordination and balance
- proper movement patterns reinforcement
- decreased risk of injury (due to all of the above mentioned)

### Warm Up routine should be:

- used by the athlete as a trigger to switch his focus on the session, increase mental and physical activation to allow high quality execution and generally bring his attention to experiences occurring in the present moment (mindfulness)
- seen as an integral part of the session – we are preparing the body and mind for the main part of the session. The warm up is important for development of the athlete in areas such as – mobility, prehab, body awareness, balance, coordination, focusing etc.
- **activate the athlete – make it short, sharp and dynamic (demands planning even for an experienced coach and athlete)**
- **individualised – the needs of the athletes are different**
- **adapted to the activity that follows – we won't warm up the same way for an endurance session or a speed session, for a race or for multiple sessions in a day**

### Dryland Warm Up

A smaller part of the warmup routine should be done on land. Choose the exercises carefully, try to combine them in a content and time efficient way.

### Mobility

Efficient technique demands good mobility especially in the *hip, low back and thoracic spine area* of the body. Paddlers should work on mobility on daily bases so why not perform these exercises partly already during the warm up. If done right, the athletes will feel the effects the moment they sit in the boat. Consider:

- simple mobility exercises (see some unspecific [here](#))
- 'mobility flows' see some unspecific flow [here](#))
- foam rolling
- dynamic stretches
- isokinetic paddling machines

## Prehab and rehab exercises

If a particular athlete has a history of injury connected to paddling and/or is working towards a better posture or shoulder health, it is wise to use some prehab exercises in the dryland part of the warm up. These may include:

- rotator cuff rehab/prehab/strengthening exercises (using [resistance bands](#) or small dumbbells)
- low back and core rehab/prehab/activation
- mobility drills
- isokinetic (paddling) machines

## Visualization and sensorization

Visualisation and its advanced version sensorization can be used on land either:

- before racing to go through race tactics
- before a session with specific technique goals when we want to make sure the athlete has a clear picture in mind of the technical execution he will be trying to achieve in the boat (shadow paddling on land – if the athlete isn't able to mimic the desired movement patten on land, it will be very difficult to achieve it in the boat)

## On Water Warm Up

On water warmup can consist of different activities. We are describing a few of these activities below.

### Easy realxed paddling

An athlete needs a few initial minutes of easy unstructured paddling to:

- regain the basic feelings of balance and water grip
- connect with the boat
- and focus on the present moment in the boat

2-5min at the very beggining of the session will normally be enough.

### Technique drills

We use drills to either:

- reinforce proper stroke patterns
- explore new or changed stroke patterens
- reinforce balance in the boat
- play with water grip feeling, boat glide and body-boat inertia (water feeling)

See our basic technique drills on our [technical resource page](#).

We normally use the 6 ABC drills in a 6x 40sec/20sec format in the warm up routines after a day of rest or when an athletes is struggling with the finding the right feelings in the boat. The ABC drills execution is sharp, dynamic and purposeful.

## Steady paddling in Zone A1 and A2 (see our [Intensity Zones Table](#))

Solid steady pace paddling in this two zones will raise your heart rate, breathing and make you sweat. It kick-starts your aerobic energy pathways and oil up all the stiff joints and movements. Should help you with the glide, boat movements and making your strokes smooth&sharp.

Example:

3-8min in solid Zone A1 is a good morning wake up before going through the paces when getting ready for a key session. Perhaps 1km in A1 followed by 500m in Zone A2 and some speed games would be a great warm up before a sessions in zones A1-A3.

## Going through the paces

We love this simple routine of going through the paces from Zone A0 to max speed. It may be precisely planned with stroke rates, distances per stroke and duration. But it can also be left to the athlete to do it 'by feeling'.

Example 1:

30" drill of stopping before each catch (balance, posture, body awareness)  
30" in Zone A1 at around SR 60  
30" in Zone A2 at around SR 80  
30" in Zone A3 at around SR 100  
20" at a moderate Race Pace SR 115  
15" in the Speed endurance Zone SR 125  
10" max speed  
Rest as needed between reps (30-60sec)

Example 2:

3' at a strong A1 pace  
2' at a solid A2 pace  
1' at a solid A3 pace  
30" at Race Pace  
20" above Race Pace  
10" full speed  
Rest as needed between reps (30-90sec)

Paddling at speeds at and above the speeds planed in the main part of session is important in order to feel relaxed and technically well set up for the session ahead. Paddling fast also 'wakes up' the anaerobic energy pathways and so facilitates the work in the high intensity Training Zones.

## SPD<sup>1</sup> check-ups

We base a lot of our sessions on learning to switch to the most efficient SPD at a given SR and level of tiredness. Not maximizing, but optimizing the SPD of the paddler in a particular situation is one of our main focuses when optimizing performance. If we are planning to use a certain SPD in the main part of the session, we may use the warm up to do a quick SPD check-up. It is as simple as asking an athlete to get to a particular SR and SPD simultaneously for short distances – counting strokes over 50m along a marked course is usually all it takes (while we use a gps or a metronome in the boat to make sure also the SR is right). Usually it only takes 3-5 sets of flying 50m to calibrate the athlete's ability to use exactly the desired SR/SPD.

Example:

If the session is trying to optimize the first 250m of a 1000m race, we might ask the athlete to calibrate himself on these 2 paces:

- 40str/100m at 130 SR – for the start
- 36str/100m at 105 SR – for the middle part

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<sup>1</sup> SPD = strokes per distance; we express it as number of strokes needed to cover a 100m distance (eg.: 36 strokes/100m approx the SPD used by the best 1000m paddlers in the middle part of the race)