



Kayak Stroke Do Bees and Don't Bees

By Joe Pescatore

I was a rugrat in Long Island back in the 1960s, and "Romper Room" was my equivalent of today's Sesame Street. There were some creepy aspects of that show (I still shiver when I think of Miss Louise turning to the screen pointing at us and saying "I see Suzy, I see Johnny...") but I always remember the "Do Be a Do Bee, and Don't Be a Don't Bee" segment:

Did you ever see a Do Bee, A Do Bee, a Do Bee?
 Did you ever see a Do Bee go this way and that?
 Go this way and that way, and this way and that way.
 Did you ever see a Do Bee go this way and that?

Sung to the tune of "Auch Du Leiber Augustine" while a cartoon bumblebee with big floppy antennae buzzed around, this song was finally driven out of my head in my late teens when John Belushi started wearing his killer bee suit on *Saturday Night Live*. However, the concept of the "Do Bees" and the "Don't Bees" always stuck with me, reinforced I guess by reading all those "Goofus and Gallant" stories in Highlights magazine at the dentist's office. What better way to learn than by simultaneously seeing the examples of what to do and what not to do? The kayak race clinic at Lake Anna gave me a great opportunity to try to apply that to my forward stroke.



THE FORWARD STROKE DO-BE—Actually, there are two Do Bees in this picture: in the white shirt on the left is Coach Holm just finishing a stroke, while in the black shirt on the right is Brian "The Blur" Blankinship just getting ready to start a stroke. You can see Holm has fully rotated his torso counter-clockwise and his paddle is completely clear of the left side of his boat - it might even be beyond parallel with his boat, he is really coiled up. Brian is a little ahead in the phase of the stroke, as he has already taken the paddle out of the water on the right side and beginning to do his catch on the left, but you can also see his torso rotation. They are both sitting pretty upright with some lean forward.



THE DON'T BE PADDLER—Here's a picture of me, a little earlier in the left hand stroke

than Holm is. On the positive side, my paddle is fully in the water and it looks like my right hand is up at eye level, though it should probably be higher. But it looks like I'm leaning way forward, versus sitting up straight, and it looks like I've pushed my right arm forward versus rotating my torso at all. In my defense, I'm not yet all the way around, but the paddle is pretty close to my hip and should be coming out of the water soon. It also looks like my left hand has moved too close to the center of the paddle. Holm put some tape marks on my paddle for his grip recommendations which had my pinky just about on the yellow label and I am definitely not doing that. Though when you look at Holm's grip, he has a lot of space showing between the outside of his hands and the paddle blade.



EXPERT OPINIONS—I asked Cyndi Janetsko and Brian, who both have excellent strokes and are skilled kayaking instructors, for some additional input:

Cyndi: "I'd also note that when Holm fully exits that blade his entire paddle shaft will be parallel to the side of his boat (like you said) and both hands will be over the water and at shoulder level. That can only be achieved with really, really good rotation. To the left is a picture that Dave took of Melissa (in the blue boat on the left, Anke is in the boat on the right) doing just this. I'd also note how Holm and Brian are both rotating from "the lower spine up". Too many of us just rotate our shoulders and not the lower torso."

Brian: "There may be more to compare than to contrast between the Do-bee's and the Don't-Bee. You have to think of John's (mid stroke) picture as between mine (start of stroke) and Holm's (end of stroke). Take a look at off-hand height (the hand not engaging the water). In all three cases it is at about eye level. As Holm's

back hand comes up to eye level, it will be where my back hand is. As mine comes forward it will be where John's is. As John completes his stroke, his off-side hand will be where Holm's (front) hand is. I find this is a key feature of using a wing paddle. If you keep

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Jul 26 (Sat)	CPA Race 3--
Jul 27 (Sun)	St. Clements Island Day Paddle --Launch from Abel's Wharf and paddle out of Breton Bay to St. Clements Island for a picnic and return. Web Site: http://troop424.freesevers.com/Breton%20Bay%20Paddle/index.html Skill Level: Advanced Beginner Paddlers Organizer(s): Led by Ralph Heimlich 301-498-0918 (leave a message).
Jul 27 (Sun)	Non CPA Event: Ocoquan River Festival --Celebrate on the Ocoquan. Skill Level : All
August	Check the calendar at http://www.cpakayaker.com/events.html
Aug 2 (Sat)	St Georges Island --Paddle in protected waters as well as on the open Potomac for a 10 mile day trip. Skill Level: Advanced Beginner Paddlers Organizer(s): Led by Mark Woodside (301) 373-4561.
Aug 2 (Sat)	Non-CPA Event: Manhattan Island Circumnavigation --Join some native NY Paddlers on a long day's expedition around Manhattan Island. Skill Level: Advanced Beginner Paddlers Organizer(s): Led by Todd Angerhoffer 202.412.7267. The launch will be at Pier 40 in Manhattan. Unload your gear and then park your car across the street. The launch will be at 7:00 AM SHARP. The group will be paddling against the start of the flood until we round the Battery.
Aug 3 (Sun)	Algonkian Island Explorer --We will paddle out of Algonkian Park, VA on the Potomac River and explore the waters to the north. More information to follow. Skill Level: Beginner Paddlers Organizer(s): Led by Jesse Aronson 571-334-5242.
Aug 9 (Sun)	Kent Island Practice Paddle, KIPP5-'08 --This is the third year for a most unusual paddle. It is a paddle where we have five practice paddles (once a month, from April to August) culminating in a final paddle, in September, where you paddle the distance you have been practicing for. Skill Level: Intermediate Paddlers Organizer(s): Led by Marshall Woodruff 202 345 0606.
Aug 15-17 (Fri-Sun)	Belle Isle, Virginia, Car Camper --Camp at Virginia's Belle Isle State Park and paddle venues on the Rappahannock River or Windmill Point on the Bay. Skill Level: Advanced Beginner Paddlers Organizer(s): Led by Bill Dodge 703-201-8636 (cell).
Aug 24 (Sun)	Pirate Club Day-Black Hills Regional Park --This is the "Gear Day" so many were discussing on the Forum. Gather at Black Hills Regional Park to share experiences with gear and mess around in boats. Skill Level: All Organizer(s): Led by Suzanne Farace 410-446-5991 Cell, Gina Cicotello 240-305-0922.
Aug 30-Sep 6 (Sat-Sat)	Fifth Annual Loons of the Adirondacks --Come paddle in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York. Lakes galore suitable for all levels of paddling will be explored. Web Site: http://web.mac.com/dtmoore/My_Site/Welcome.html Skill Level: All Paddlers Organizer(s): Led by David Moore 301-704-3262/301-445-3273. This is CPA's fifth annual week long paddle trip in the Adirondack Mountains of New York for paddlers of all levels. Past paddlers have significantly developed both their stamina and their skills during the week. Trip lengths vary from 4-5 miles to over 15 miles. We always plan on a variety of distances to accommodate everyone's preferences.

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your off-hand so that it follows the horizon completely across the stroke, then you will tend to have good rotation. If you drop your off-side hand, you tend to shovel water up and towards your kayak which is inefficient and may cause the kayak to steer with each forward stroke.

Speaking of rotation, if again you visualize the three of us taking one stroke, you can see I have wound up for the catch and am about to spear forward as I rotate my arms down. John is half way through his stroke. The lines on his shirt indicate there was some rotation going on, but perhaps not from the bottom of the spine like Holm and I. The stroke continues around to where Holm is completely rotated around and starting to exit. Due to a knee injury, I was locked into the thigh braces so I would not use my knee too much. Holm on the other hand is pressing with his legs to use his largest muscles (quads) to help power the kayak. With John leaning forward as much as he is, he might be inhibiting that rotation a bit. (Note from John: I was also locked into "sea kayaker" position vs. knees up, as I'm not yet stable enough in the new boat to paddle knees up.)

I find the best position for full body rotation to be feet and knees together in the middle of the kayak, butt to the back of the seat, leaning slightly forward (like Holm and I) and the lower back arched forward (belly button pushed up and forward). This really frees your body for rotation. Unfortunately most sea kayaks are not designed for this type of stroke. John's paddle is correctly submerged (right length). The entire throat is under but the shaft is not. He is getting all the power the blade can provide but it is not so deep that it slows his exit. If John was rotating more from the spine and less from the shoulders, the wing paddle might be a little farther from the kayak, which means he would have powered through a longer stroke without it being any further behind him. John's elbow has not pulled past his shoulders so at least he is not arm-paddling.

John also mentioned pushing with his off-side. When I started paddling, I remember reading the push was a certain percentage and the pull the rest of the power. I no longer think of it in those terms at all. Now I think of reaching as far forward as I can for the catch by straightening my lead arm and rotating as much as possible. As I plant the blade, I think of pulling back with my abs while my on-side foot shoves the boat forward. Holm (again this year) told me to engage with the bicep. He is trying to get me to be more aggressive in the stroke, not pull with my arms. When I get that 18 foot kayak up to 6 MPH, I can hold that speed without too much effort. To maintain 6.5-7MPH, I have to be aggressive and always pulling harder."

Thanks to Bill Woodruff and Dave Biss for the pictures, and to Brian and Cyndi for guest commentary.