

# PREPARATION, TRAINING and TACTICS



by Rob Vallis

## Registration and Points

At LCRK we encourage paddlers to enter a competitive class in the race, however if you expect to take more than 15 hours, it's probably a good idea if you enter Brooklyn or Bust. There are no hard and fast rules and you earn points for the club either way. Just be aware that if you're starting at 4 o'clock in Brooklyn or Bust it could possibly be windy around the water before dark. Give that some consideration.

## Preparation

- **Make your boat decision NOW.**  
It is a few months to race time, and the longer you have in your boat, the more comfortable you'll be on the night, and the more chance you'll have to iron the bugs out.

## Training Strategy

Whatever your objectives, there are a few must do's:

- **Paddle 40km in one hit, on two occasions:**  
This is the longest stretch between major checkpoints. If you can't paddle 40km in a row, then you can't paddle in the race. It will also show you what sore parts you will have in the race. Don't go too far. 40km is enough. Sore points will probably come from your bum, your back, your wrists or your tummy because you'll get food and drink that doesn't work, you'll get sick or you'll be too hungry.
- **Paddle as many Wednesday nights as you can:**  
Consistency in training is a good thing. Not just lots of training but *consistent* training. It doesn't really matter how fast you go.
- **Try and do all the familiarisation paddles:**  
They are the best way to experience the river, and they are genuinely fantastic training. They are a good distance.
- **Do not exercise during the week before the race.**  
You should taper. Eat food, don't do any exercise, chocolate is good!
- **Paddlers pushing for a great time should also consider some cross-training** including things like running, riding, swimming and working the gym. They will build up your endurance and strength, and it means less time in the kayak.
- **Paddlers who simply want to finish the race should at least ensure regular training**, preferably twice a week (Wednesday night and once on the weekend). Really, it's up to you how far you go, how long you paddle for and how hard you go, but, twice a week is important. It'll stand you in good stead come the race, however fast you want to go.

## Before Race Day

- **Get your jacket (PFD) scrutineered.** Scrutineering for 2008 is at LCRK on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October OR at any of the familiarisation paddles ie 25<sup>th</sup> August Sackville to Wisemans, 22<sup>nd</sup> September Windsor to Sackville, 20<sup>th</sup> October Sackville to Windsor (night). Basically, they dunk your PFD in a barrel of water. (You can do this on race day, but you will be paddling the Classic in a wet PFD.)
- **Get a good nights sleep** the night before. *This is really important* because you won't get any the next night.

## On Race Day

- **Get there early:** 11 o'clock or earlier if you can (you'll get a good parking spot)
- **Get your boat scrutineered first thing**

## Race Tactics

It's a long race, so I'll break this up into three sections.

### The Start to Sackville: 31km

- It is very important to get to Sackville without being tired
- Don't go too hard in the first section
- Don't get excited and blow it away when the gun goes off. Take it easy.
- Try finding somebody of a similar speed and buddy up. Have a chat to them, bludge off them, give them a bit of a bludge off you. It helps your morale and makes it easier.

### Sackville to Wisemans: 34km

- In my opinion, this is the hardest part of the race.
- The tide may turn against you.
- You'll probably start to feel the cold and feel sore
- It could be your usual bedtime so your body starts to want to go to sleep
- You have to do all your psychological preparation here because your brain will start to do silly things as it's not used to paddling at midnight
- Try and think of some ways that you can convince your body that it is actually feeling fine. For me it's: singing – bad 80's rock music works really well.
- Talk to every boat that you've passed, talk to every boat that passes you
- Keep yourself hydrated.

### Wisemans Ferry to Finish: 45km

- Congratulations! This is the easy part.
- Once you get back into that boat at Wisemans Ferry you will finish the race.
- You'll be lonelier. There will be fewer paddlers on the water because the race will have stretched out.
- Take it one checkpoint at time. They're typically only 6 or 7 km apart
- For the serious paddlers, avoid the low tide pit stop at all costs. It is evil. It will suck you in and you will never leave.
- For the people who aren't feeling good, seriously the low tide pit stop is a great spot to stop. You'll get a massage if you are lucky. You'll get a nice hot drink, maybe some soup, maybe a scone. Take your time, get by the fire, get warm and get back in the boat.

- *Never ever ever* stop at Spencer, unless you intend to pull out or you have serious problems. It looks nice but it will take you ½ hr off your paddling course, and can have some serious shallows if the tide is low. It's only 10km to the finish now, which is less than your Wednesday night paddle.

### **Tidal Influence on Paddling**

Deep water runs fastest and shallow water runs slowest, so choose your position on the river thoughtfully:

- Tide running with you: Paddle in the middle of the river
- Tide running against you: Paddle as close to the banks as you can. Just don't run into trees!
- If you are going to have any long stops, try to make them when the tide is running against you so that you don't lose the benefit of the tide when you're sitting on your bum having a hot chocolate.

Have a look in the race book for the tide chart so that you can see how the tide will influence your race plan.