

Mark Ledger: Polo Captain Manifesto



About Me:

I am first year PhD student and the current Men's Polo Captain - but have been involved with the club for as long as I can remember. I've therefore developed a vested interest in the club and its continued success. My ultimate aim is to ensure that all aspects of the club thrive, which is why I have taken on responsibilities beyond those expected of the polo reps. I am particularly proud of my role in this year's recruitment drive; I helped advertise the club by contacting each college and arranging for leaflets to be placed in their fresher's pack, for posters to be displayed around their buildings and emails to be sent out via their JCR's/MCR's. Steve and I then distributed these personally. An article representing the canoe club was also written for the Team Durham Annual Review. I then prepared session plans for each taster session and helped to coach the majority of sessions. I was also responsible for finding the best replacement pool when the Dolphin Centre was closed for maintenance. I feel that this contribution, in combination with the effort of many others, resulted in the better than average intake this year.

Experience:

I have been paddling for around 14 years and was recently selected for the Men's GB Polo Squad. I am also a Level 2 Canoe and Kayak coach, with 2 years' experience acting as the Team Durham Canoe and Kayak Coach.

This year's contribution:

During the past year I have attempted to build upon the opportunities already offered by the club, without interfering with sessions that are already running successfully. My main focus has been on supporting the Men's team; however, I have embraced the chance to coach the rest of the club when it was appropriate. After evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the club, I came to the conclusion that the short university terms meant that many members were only paddling for 6 months of the year. A large portion of my work was therefore focused on encouraging members to participate in canoe polo (or canoeing more generally) outside of the established university sessions. With this in mind, I arranged for the club to be affiliated with the BCU so we

could enter external competitions, entered the club/players into suitable Yorkshire, Northumbria and National Leagues, and oversaw the teams' management during the year. I have also encouraged members to attend Tees Tigers and helped them find local clubs to paddle with during the summer break. I believe that this has developed the paddlers involved significantly by encouraging greater participation, allowing newer players to experience a higher level of competition and encouraging the more experienced players to take on new leadership roles or positions within their teams.

I have also helped to organise and run the Sunday land sessions, helped members to set up and maintain their personal equipment, assisted at all polo sessions and contributed to exec meetings.

Future Aims

I have two interlinked aims for next year:

I would firstly like to see the recent involvement in non-university paddling continued and extended. As I mentioned above I feel this is a key part of maximizing paddlers' development, however I believe there is potential for realizing an additional benefit. One of the most common criticisms I have heard in recent years is that, whilst there have been a number of successful socials recently, the social side of the club isn't what it was. My personal view is that as the focus of the club has changed we have been slow to come up with social events that are suited to the club's new interests. I therefore think that it would be beneficial to increase the socialization that occurs within competitive disciplines. After speaking to Alex, we believe that it would be beneficial to build free time into events/training for the social activities (organised by the social sec), and ideally find some less serious weekend events to enter. At these the focus could be on enjoyment and team building, rather than serious preparation.

