



# 'Have a Go'-Athlete

"Starting Out"

# 2013

## Introduction

The CRNZ Athlete and School Programmes have been designed to give clubs and coaches a resource that will assist them in developing and providing paddling programmes aligned to the needs of their athletes at each stage of the athlete development pathway.

## Overview

To become a world-class coach for a particular coaching community, coaches need to understand their athletes. An understanding of their own athletes' individual characteristics, will then lead coaches to better understand how to cater for collective group needs and individual considerations when designing and implementing activities, games and sessions for their athletes.

CRNZ promotes the following values in the delivery of the paddler programmes for developing coaches or athletes:

Programmes and activities should be:

***Athlete focused:*** Talent belongs to an individual, not an organisation, parents, coach or any other interested party. Athletes' welfare is paramount and must take precedence over the self-interest of other persons or organisations.

***Holistic:*** Responsive to the holistic development and performance needs of athletes and the support of coaches, parents, teachers and organisations influencing those athletes.

***Excellence oriented:*** Aim to create and reward a culture of excellence with the ultimate aim of producing winners.

***Long-term:*** Support a culture of continuous improvement and foster ongoing development and identification across the athlete's career.

***Sport specific:*** Support sport and discipline-specific identification and development methods overlaid across the talent development pathway.

***Collaborative:*** Involve close partnerships between key stakeholders.

The CRNZ Athlete and School Programmes have been broken into five development age related programmes so that coaches can choose relevant learning opportunities specific to the athlete community that they are coaching.

CRNZ encourages readers to examine this document in conjunction with the [CRNZ Athlete Development Curriculum](#) resource.

## CRNZ “Have a Go” Athlete and School Programme

### **Objectives:**

At the beginning of this stage the objectives are to learn overall sport skills; build water sense and safety awareness; and learn basic boat and paddle handling skills in age appropriate kayaks.

### **Key Outcomes:**

At the end of this stage, participants will:

- Be physically literate (competent in fundamental movement skills)
- Possess fundamental canoe kayak skills
- Use the canoe basic boat steering skills in demonstrating boat control
- Paddle continuously in a single boat
- Be comfortable and confident in boats and playing in, on, and around the water
- Be able to swim 25m with a PFD.

Children at the age of 6-12yrs are at the optimal point to learn basic skills; therefore the objectives should be the introduction and learning of the basics (balance, steering, and propulsions) in all types of appropriate canoes. To help develop other basic sport skills, as well as coordination and body awareness, children should be enrolled in other sporting activities three to four times per week. Developing physical literacy requires a broad base of activities such as athletics, swimming, gymnastics, etc. For example the Run, Jump Throw program offered by Athletics NZ for participants in this age group is a good example.

#### ○ **Technique:**

Athletes at this stage should focus on learning how to balance and properly control all types of canoes. There is no need at this age to specialize. By the end of this stage, athletes should be able to set up the body properly in the boat, be able to stay in stroke and be able to properly hold a paddle. Athletes should be able to properly steer a sprint canoe. By the time athletes reach the end of this stage they must have good fundamental canoeing skills.

#### ○ **Tactical**

In this stage, participants should engage in deliberate play and should learn basic decision making skills such as how to dock a boat properly, how to avoid hazards in the water, and judging weather conditions for safety reasons. Participants should also learn to launch and dock a boat, listen and follow instructions, and learn to paddle in a group. Toward the middle of the stage, athletes should be starting to make decisions on the race course such as properly lining up, starting, and propelling their boat down the course.

#### ○ **Equipment**

At this stage of development athletes will require stable boats, but by the end of the stage they should be using an intermediate style racing kayaks. Therefore, Clubs should have a good progression in boats from very stable to newer style racing boats. Kayakers should be using seats, but the seats should sit as low as possible in the boat to maximize stability. As the athlete grows, longer and bigger

blades can be used, but not at the expense of good technique. Participants should be exposed to a variety of equipment. Importantly, throughout this stage participants should be taught to be responsible and careful in the use of fragile boats, paddles and other equipment.

- **Coaching:**

Coaches will require a good knowledge of growth and development as well as knowledge of the fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills that make up physical literacy. They should have the ability to assess physical literacy and make recommendations to the children to improve any gaps. Coaches who are dealing with athletes at the start of this stage should have completed the coaching startup course.

- **Training Volume:**

At the start of this stage, participants should be participating in 3-5 sessions per week lasting 30-60 minutes. The session should include a warm up; work on general technical skills; modified games or activities with simple rules and a cool-down. Towards the end of this stage they should continue to do 3-5 sessions per week lasting 30-80 minutes with more of an aerobic fitness component included. Nevertheless, participants should be encouraged to 'hang-out', and 'horse around', in, and under boats. Throughout this process they are learning critical paddling skills.

- **Competition:**

Athletes at this stage do not compete in regional regattas, but can be invited to informal Club regattas. The regattas should be a half-day in length and should be 'unlimited fun' culminating with a Bar-B- Q at the end of the event. The athletes should compete in stable boats. In addition, coaches should start developing team boat skills and team boat races should be part of all regattas. There should be no championship regattas in small boats for this age group.

Athletes nearing the end of this stage can start competing in head to head style competitions tailored towards their developmental needs. The length of the regatta can be increased to a one-day event and these athletes may race 3-4 times per year in local regattas.

However, these athletes should continue to race in canoes, and team boat events should be stressed. Finally, even though the level of competition has increased these regattas should continue to be fun for the athlete and they should be recognized for their achievements by handing out medals or ribbons on a podium at the end of the day.

- **Mental Preparation:**

The main objective at this level is to create an environment where the participants want to paddle, enjoy being on the water, learning early skills on how to paddle. Coaches need to clearly understand the importance of such a social environment and have the skills to create it.

They need to be skilled at teaching the basic skills (because even though at this level, the 'athletes' are young, or new to the sport, they still will begin to build confidence by 'improving' in the sport. There needs to be a variety in the training, again so the young athletes-to-be want to continue. A key point here is building desire to stay involved and

building self-confidence. Some suggestions are movies on Olympic Heroes (motivation), kilometers charts or personal improvement recognition, games to foster team play. All of this will create a foundation upon which the coach and the athlete develop a long-term productive relationship.

- **Nutrition:**

Children at this age should be made aware of proper hydration. They can also be Taught about nutrition through analyzing the snacks they bring to the Club and be encouraged to make healthy choices. Coaches can also use informal talks to inform athletes and parents on healthy choices. Clubs should be encouraged to provide healthy snacks during regattas.

- **Monitoring:**

During this stage many children will start their growth spurt, especially females. This is known as [peak height velocity](#) (PHV). Since PHV is used as a marker for many of the critical windows of trainability, (refer to CRNZ Athlete Development Curriculum) height should be measured a minimum of 4 times per year. This stage also coincides with the critical windows for suppleness and speed 1 (agility); therefore it is suggested that a simple flexibility test such as the “Sit and Reach Test” be used to monitor hamstring and low back flexibility; and a shuttle run test to monitor agility. Finally, although endurance is not one of the critical windows of trainability listed in this section, it is still a very important measure of general health and wellbeing and can be used as a benchmark for future improvement. CRNZ suggests using a simple field test such as the Cooper test or the Leger test to measure endurance. (Refer to Coaching Toolbox for more information on these tests)

- **Safety:**

CRNZ recommends a coach to athlete ratio of 1:8. In addition, all athletes enrolled in these programs should wear life jackets when on the dock or in the water. It is also a requirement that coaches follow the CRNZ Code of Safety.

- **Ancillary Capacities:**

The end of this should educate about stage, children and parents proper clothing and equipment at practice (hat, water bottle, sunscreen, change of clothing) and they should be aware of how to properly warm-up and cool down for practice and races; calisthenics, stretching, jogging.