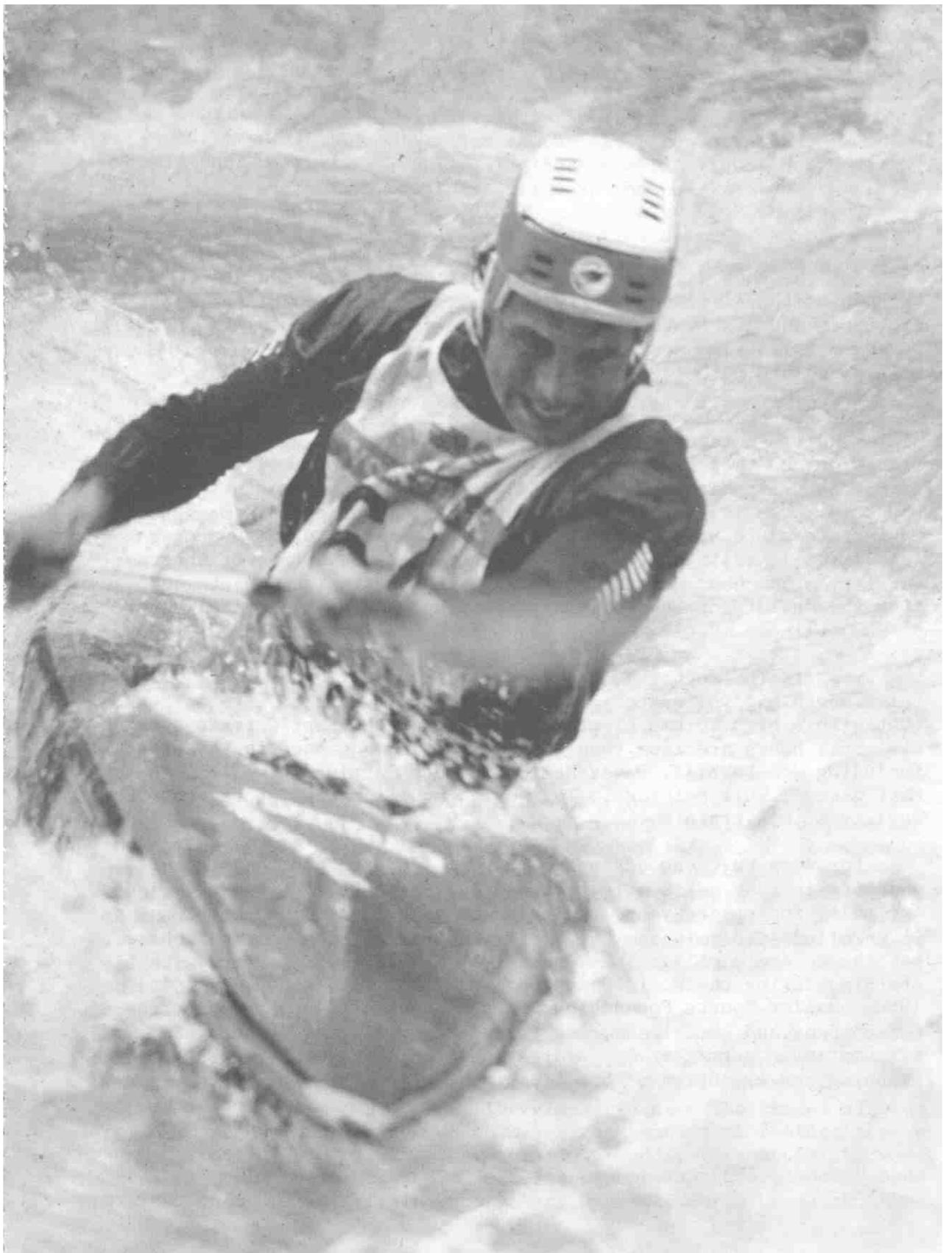


RICHARD FOX



"Plan B!" Richard Fox turns on the speed in an attempt to make up for a penalty he has just taken. (Riva Photo)

RICHARD FOX

"I like paddling on my own.
The people in Britain who
have made it have the
personality to cope alone."

For the past 4 years Britain's Richard Fox has been at or near the top of the K1 class. He is the master technician of the sport right now and his trademark is an extraordinarily smooth and precise style, coupled with a high level of endurance. Interestingly, he says he evolved his technique in part from studying top C1s.

But the real essence of Richard Fox is his cerebral approach to slalom. His precision on the gates is only the most visible sign of a precision and smoothness that characterizes his whole life -- "an extraordinarily high degree of organization," as his coach, Ken Langford, puts it. This cerebral approach, I believe, is necessitated in large measure by the paucity of really first-rate whitewater facilities in Britain. One must take complete advantage of whatever facilities one has. If the quality of the whitewater is not good, then the quality of the thinking, planning, and physiological nature of the training must be good.

Despite the fact that Fox does not have easy access to full-length big whitewater courses, he does not try to make up for that with a high volume of training (the way the East Germans did). His total hours are less than several people mentioned in this book, including Jon Luggbill, Davey Hearn, Norbert Sattler as well as the East German, Wulf Reinicke. This only magnifies the importance of the quality of his training.

Fox does have one advantage over many of today's top slalom paddlers in that he is able to train full time for very long periods, including the entire year leading up to each World Championships. He is enrolled at Birmingham University in a physical education course, but the academic obligations do not, by and large, interfere with his training during the World Championship years. A \$10,000 grant in 1980, smaller Sports Foundation grants since then, sponsorship from a tea company and social security finance his training. Thus, his circumstances permit a very professional attitude with regard to the planning and execution of his training.

Fox first gained admittance to the world elite by winning the bronze medal in K1 individual at the Jonquiere World Championships. He was also World Champion in team. The following year, he was in a three-way tie for second in the Europa Cup. Fox subsequently went into the Bala World Championships as the favorite, a tough role to play. But he pulled it off, winning both the individual and team at Bala. He further cemented his position at the head of the K1 class by winning the Europa Cup in 1982. One has to go back to Siegbert Horn of the German Democratic Republic to find someone who has so completely dominated K1.

Vital Statistics

Richard Fox is 5' 9" and weighs 156 pounds, His resting pulse is 45, and muscle biopsies of his deltoid muscle contained 70 percent slow-twitch fiber. Richard was born June 5, 1960 in Sommerset, England, but grew up outside London. His father, a graduate of Cambridge University, who administers examinations for the building trades and other organizations, is currently an official in the British Canoe Union. His mother is in charge of publicity for canoeing in Britain. Richard has an older sister who is married and lives in Germany, as well as a younger brother and sister. His younger brother used to kayak also, but gave it up.

Equipment

Currently, Fox paddles the Premier, the latest in a long line of Graham Mackereth-designed boats. The construction of the boats is noteworthy: they are made of carbon-fiber/kevlar and weigh between 6.5 and 7 kilos.

Fox is adamant about having a good, tight backstrap: "you notice it when it breaks out." Richard rips them out from time to time, an indication of the stress he is putting on them. Thus, his boat is arranged so they are easy to replace. There are bolts fibreglassed onto the outside of the seat and the straps have brass eyelets on them so they can easily be fastened to the seat with wingnuts. The strap is padded -- a padded sleeve is put over the two inch belt. Fox says he doesn't bother to attach the backstrap to the underside of the deck to hold it up. It stays up by itself.

I believe that the paddles Fox uses are an integral part of his technique because they are extremely light and the blades are very thin, thus facilitating intricate feathering in the water. They consist of aluminum shafts and fiberglass blades. The blades also do not have much spoon to them which makes them easier to feather than a wooden blade. Another important point, Fox adds, is that unlike wood, "they all feel the same." Fox alternates between "Freeblades," made by Ian Freestone in Britain, and "Stars" made by Chris Lovelock. He

uses the Stars for training and the Freeblades for racing.

Fox says that the thinness of the tips is useful for slicing through the water. He is so sensitive to the tips that he can tell whether there is tape or mud on the ends. This is why he does not like any aluminum tips. Richard prefers blades which are offset at 80-85 degrees. He used 206 at both Jonquiere and Bala but is now experimenting with 207 and 208. While the blades he uses in slalom races do not have much spoon to them, the ones he used in flatwater distance paddling have more. "This helps me get a better bite on the water," he explains.

Chronology

Richard Fox started paddling at age 11, with his father and for the first four years, didn't know what slalom was. He and his father ran rolling sessions and out of that came the St. Alban's Canoe Club. Another club, which later merged with St. Alban's, had some more experienced paddlers and Richard learned from them initially. He and his father built boats together and Richard went on trips with the other paddlers. At that same time, he also did soccer, cross-country, and gymnastics.

Richard started slalom racing in 1975. At first he was reluctant to get into racing but his friends urged him on. Soon after, he finished third in a race and this piqued his interest more. He did most of his training with a neighbor in those days and the two boys had to bicycle six miles to where some gates were hung. Richard quickly got promoted up through the divisions and this got him even more excited about the sport. At the end of 1975 he decided to train really hard. In 1976, Richard made the British Junior team as a reserve. He was about 21st or so in the first 2 races of the year. In the second race he was so fast he would have won it if he had been clean. That summer he went to Augsburg and Lofer with the Junior team and watched the Europa Cup final. In August he got 8th on the Treweryn, in Bala. During the summer of 1976, even though he was only a reserve on the team, he did a great deal of paddling and this is how he improved so much.

Richard kept training that summer after the races had ended. He trained by himself. His training at that time was more speed oriented than it is now. It was basically interval training on slightly moving water.

Types of workouts:

4 X 2 minutes, followed by 30 second sprints.

This was the basis of the winter's training, too.

In the spring of 1977, Richard started doing 60 second courses, and paddled twice a day for about one hour each time. Although he was improving quickly now, he didn't know how well he was doing relative to other British paddlers, and was thus surprised when he came in fourth at the first pool slalom of the year. In the spring, Pete Keane, a member of the British C1 team, got Richard into a senior training camp at Matlock and Richard had some fast times there, too. The workouts at these camps were simply as many timed runs as you could do without dropping off too much.

It was at this training camp that Richard first met Ken Langford and he obviously made an impression on Ken since Ken worked a lot with him that weekend. This was the first time Richard realized that he was as good as the other top paddlers in Britain and it stimulated him to start training three times a day, doing largely 30 and 60 second courses.

The first race that season was a team selection race at Grandtully, Scotland. Here Richard met Albert Kerr (later World Champion at Spittal) for the first time. Kerr won the race but Fox had the fastest running time. Kerr did 198 clean, Fox 191 with two touches. People complained about Fox's time, thinking it must be wrong. Then on second runs, Fox did 194 and fewer people complained. Fox finished third in that race.

The next race was Bala and Fox was 9th. On the basis of this he made the top 6 and was thus eligible to go to Muotathal, Switzerland, where an additional selection race was held to cut the squad down to 4 for the World Championships.

It was a tense atmosphere at Muota. The six boaters knew that two of them would get the axe. Fox was having trouble with the water because it was quite high. People more or less wrote him off, especially after first runs when he had about 110 penalties. But by virtue of a clean second run, Richard was second (to Kerr), and made the team.

It was a small team for Spittal, and Richard said that was good -- no incompetents to pull out of the water. Richard believes the small team concept was the beginning of Britain's rise in slalom.

Prior to going to Spittal, the K1s had a clinic up at Grandtully, lasting 5 days. Langford ran it. All 4 K1s were close on running times. But one time Langford really chewed Kerr out and after that Kerr started leaving the others behind by 5-6 seconds a course. It was then that the British realized that Kerr was good enough to win the Worlds.



Britain's Albert Kerr has been World Champion every time he has competed: 1977 in the individuals; 1979 and 1981 in team. Photo by Stuart Fisher of "Canoeist" (incorporating "White Water Magazine")

Spittal

On practice runs, Richard unknowingly ripped his boat on the starting platform while sitting in the water waiting for his run. He was having a really good run, when suddenly he noticed water around his knees. It was all he could do to get to the far bank and take out. After a big hassle, he got another boat and was allowed to resume his practice run at the end of the class.

On the first run, he fiftied gate 16R. His second run was pretty good but he got three 10's with his shoulders. He was relatively pleased with his run, though, and was excited when Albert Kerr won the race.

He says today that the biggest impression Spittal made on him was how quickly the World Championships transpires: "You can blow six months of training in an eyelash." Because of this experience he looked for ways to prepare better for Jonquiere and Bala.

After the World Championships Richard was obliged to concentrate on school since he had missed a lot of work due to paddling. He was even in danger of getting thrown out but since he had been on the British team, he was allowed to stay.

However, after Spittal, Richard's paddling went into a decline which ultimately led to his missing the British team in 1978. He was still fast, but he hit a lot of gates. It was to remedy the penalty problem that Fox and Ken Langford devised a rigorous mental analysis of gate technique that was ultimately to see Richard Fox become the technical master of his event.

Center of Excellence

At the end of 1977, a "Center of Excellence" for canoe slalom was started at Stafford and Stone, England, with Ken Langford as head coach. These centers of excellence were started in various sports around Britain in an attempt to improve British performances in international athletics.

Soon after the center began at Stone, Richard started going there on weekends. He went there because Ken Langford was there. Richard liked Langford's personality, and Langford was the British team coach then. In Richard's view, Langford's attitude was one of letting each boater prove what he could do, an approach which appealed to Richard.

Other attractions of the Stone Center of Excellence were the facts that Stone was centrally located and in easy reach of all other training sites, and that there was a fair bit of money to be spent on the center. Associated with the center is a shallow river, the Trent, which is used for slalom gates, a clubhouse, a flatwater barge canal which is used for distance work, and the use of a nearby gymnasium.

In that first year, there were 8-10 K1s at Stone, all of roughly the same ability. Thus, a lot of work was done in groups at that time. Langford worked with the athletes in "taking everything apart and analyzing it." One of the gate workouts they did during this period really stressed penalties: if you hit a gate you had to get out of your boat, stand on the shore and look at what you did wrong.

As time went on, Richard began to work with Langford alone more. This was because many of the other good K1s had left Stone for various reasons and the abilities of the group became more varied. Fox became the best of the group and Langford would occasionally use Fox as an example for the others -- "do it the way Richard did it." Richard vaguely disliked this so he started to work alone with Ken more. By the time of the Bala World Championships, he was more and more independent of Langford so that he was doing a great deal on his own, submitting his log to Langford for occasional analysis and seeing him once in a while to have Langford critique his technique. This is the nature of the relationship as it exists today.

Ken Langford

Ken was born July 18, 1943 and is a teacher of physical education. He has two Masters' Degrees and is working on a Doctorate. But more importantly, he has had a very long association with the World Championships dating back to 1965, when he first competed in them in K1 and won a silver medal in the 1969 team race.



Britain's master technical coach, Ken Langford. (Photo Courtesy of Ken Langford)

Langford's principal aim is the individualization of training. He rarely uses the stopwatch to compare boaters. His athletes believe Ken ought to teach them how to compete against themselves, rather than against each other. A slalom race, they feel, is a race against the clock and an individual race. The winner is he who has the proper trajectories so that the boat glides well and never stops, and he who is capable of having the precision for not touching the poles.

Even though boaters do not compete against each other in practice, they do go hard. On the bank at the start and finish are two synchronized clocks. The boater starts and stops himself, being the only one to get the time. On a course of about one minute, the choice between one route and another usually results in a one to five second differential. Learning which route is faster encourages the athlete to make the fastest method part of his permanent repertoire.

During a training session, Ken stresses that his boaters should have a very precise intention of what they are trying to do. For example, in this upstream I should sneak 10 centimeters of the bow under the outside pole; the beginning of my duffek stroke should occur 40 centimeters before the gate; I should attack this reverse gate with the green pole 2 centimeters from my back.

The difference between intention and realization should be very small. This is what enables a slalomist to have the confidence to go clean. In this type of work, the coach intervenes very little. It is the athlete who must define his own intentions. The coach only makes suggestions here and there. The athlete knows individually if what he is doing corresponds to his intentions or not.

Ken Langford thinks that it is not necessary for a top boater to memorize all the strokes he is going to use between gates. Only the position of the boat, its distance from the poles, the distance between your back and the pole, the position of the paddle relative to the gate -- all this must be inscribed as intentions in the mind of the paddler.

Trouble in 1978

The year 1978 was the nadir of Richard Fox's paddling career. He failed to make the British team in 1978 and seems to have gone into a period of depression during which he was not very interested in training. This lasted until the winter of 1978-79. But after that he emerged, phoenix-like, with a renewed determination which has stayed with him ever since.

Richard didn't make the British team because he hit too many gates in the team selection trials. He was sixth at the first race,

lower at the second. He says now, looking back on the experience, "Not making the team can be a good thing for some people. It depends when it happens. If it comes in the beginning of your career, it can be good, but not if it comes at the end of it." Richard could have gone to the international race at Spindleruv Mlyn, Czechoslovakia, as a reserve but he chose not to. He decided to concentrate on school and passed his exams instead.

He did, however, go on the youth tour with John McLeod later in the summer. But even that did not go as planned. Richard's original intent was to win the Spittal race -- but he came in third. During the trip, the British paddlers started fooling around and a bad attitude developed in that the paddlers were not as serious as they should have been. This upset John McLeod and he considered sending Fox home. But in retrospect, Fox says that the experience of not making the team in 1978 and being a "bad boy" at Spittal settled him down immensely for Jonquiere and later. By the end of 1978, Richard was racing well again.

Richard moved permanently to Stone in September, 1978. He also got his first job about that time, as a laborer, working from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. He hated it because it exhausted him during the day and yet he had to train in the evenings. Still he lasted 10 weeks. Finally, it got so bad that he just quit without giving sufficient notice and had to forfeit 50 pounds but "it was worth it." Then he was unemployed for six weeks.

The period took its toll on Richard. He didn't do much training that fall -- his training log doesn't even start until November 6. It is also full of comments such as "finding it hard to fit in training and work," or "bored and depressed," and finally for one four week period the only entry is "training was so sporadic and inefficient... couldn't be bothered to record it."

But following the six weeks of unemployment, John Court, head administrator at the Stone Center of Excellence, arranged for Richard to do a study of canoeing facilities in the North Staffordshire area and have the government pay him for it. He was given six months to prepare the study. This meant in effect that Richard had unlimited training time. After this, his training really took off, and has been exemplary ever since.

The next six months were the most intense he ever had with Ken Langford. He was now a full time paddler. Quite often he would be alone with Ken. Generally he did two workouts a day, sometimes three.

Richard Fox

1978-79

(Training time in minutes per week)

Week No	Date	Total Training	Water Training	Athletic Training	White water Gates	Flat water Gates	Down river Training	River Play	Strength	Squash, Games, Runs, Swims, Biking
1	11/6 -11/12	595	295	300	60	40	195		135	165
2	11/13-11/19	621	432	189	151	50	231		130	59
3	11/20-11/36	688	430	258	60	30	340		220	38
4	11/27-12/3	325	195	130	195				90	40
5	12/4 -12/10	315	120	195	60		60		165	30
6	12/11-12/17	210*	90	120	60	30			90	30
7	12/18-12/24	170*	130	40	100		30		30	10
8	12/25- 1/1	190*	90	100	60	30			90	10
9	1/2 - 1/8	170*	130	40	100		30		30	10
10	1/8 - 1/14	640	555	85	470	40	45			85
11	1/15- 1/21	310	110	200	80	30			90	110
12	1/22- 1/28	540	280	260	160		120		150	110
13	1/29- 2/4	780	500	280	400		100		80	200
14	2/5 - 2/11	836	405	431	335	30		40	126	305
15	2/12- 2/18	926	577	349	475	20	82		225	124
16	2/19- 2/25	809	459	350	429		30		270	80
17	2/26- 3/4	1078	720	358	615	30	75		180	178
18	3/5 - 3/11	930	830	100	615		215		40	60
19	3/12- 3/18	895	740	155	630		110		155	
20	3/19- 3/25	845	770	75	770				45	30
21	3/26- 4/1	1043	978	65	888		90		45	20
22	4/2 - 4/8	860	855	5	835		20			5
23	4/9 - 5/15	315	135	180	45			90		180
24	4/16- 4/22	576	516	60	376		60	80		60
25	4/23- 4/29	1090	1070	20	865		205			20
26	4/30- 5/6	230	230		95		135			
27	5/7 - 5/13	1069	1005	64	645		360			64
28	5/14- 5/20	526	526		526					
29	5/21- 6/27	1170	1170		1170					
30	5/28- 6/3	424	409	15	114			295		15
31	6/4 - 6/10	792	792		687		105			
32	6/11- 6/17	920	920		755	105	60			
33	6/18- 6/23	726	726		714		12			
34	6/24- 7/1	620	610	10	535		45	30		10
35	7/2 - 7/8	167	167		92		30	45		
	Total	22401	17967	4434	14167	435	2785	580	2386	2048

* Estimated: "Training during this time was sporadic and inefficient... couldn't be bothered to record it."

Types of Workouts in This Period

- * Upstream river paddles -- 30 minutes in a slalom boat. He had to paddle in the dark and it was very hard to see where to go which meant that he kept getting stuck on the bank. Also there was a strong current, so paddling upstream was hard work.
- * Gate technique -- short sequences, once a week.
- * Endurance: 2 min. on, 1 min. rest; longer courses -- 2-5 mins.
- * 5 min. cycle: Have to run the course and get back to the top in 4.5 minutes. Richard would emphasize the downstream part, but would paddle right up to the start afterwards. Towards the end of the workout, this would get very hard. He does more of this kind of work now than he used to.
- * Weekend whitewater courses. He would go to Oakamore, a small rapid where there is room for about 5 gates. There are some well-defined eddies there, too.
- * In March, he started doing sprints on the canal. He increased the rest period; cut out the distance paddles.
- * In March-April, he started doing "Times 6" on short rapids. Here, four or five gates were hung on a rapids and the boater did six laps on them to make a full length course. Fox found that it was best to do this with one other person; one goes while the other rests.
- * Two-three times a week he would do the following sprints, totaling 20 minutes of work:

2 X 30 sec.

2 X 60 sec.

2 X 120 sec.

Rest Time = Work Time

2 X 120 sec.

4 X 60 sec.

8 X 30 sec.

He didn't get into a downriver boat after Christmas. As time went on, he did the same amount of work but over more sessions, with more rest.

Gate Technique

Because of all the penalties Fox got in 1978, he and Ken Langford developed unique, highly sophisticated gate workouts to achieve technical perfection and consistency.

After Fox started working with Ken Langford, they went through all the various turns and moves in K1 and figured out which was the optimum way for Fox to do them. The way they did this is interesting. At Stone, about 10 minutes' drive from where Fox and Langford live, there is the Trent River. On the Trent there are about 20 gates. Langford has 2 battery-operated clocks with red sweep hands, contained in styrofoam boxes which he brings out to practice and sets up on the bank by the start and finish of the course. This way the boater can time himself, but doesn't compare his time with anyone else's.

By timing 3-4 gate sequences (by hand -- not by the clocks), they found the optimum way for doing all the key slalom moves. Then, they timed the same moves as part of a full length course to make sure they still worked when Fox was tired.

This was an on-going process; as Fox's strength and flexibility increased over the years, new options became possible for him. New boat designs opened other possibilities. All this was meticulously observed, written down, and put to use.

"Route Patterns"

According to Ken, "Richard has about 90 gates on a course, not 30." These extra "gates" characterize the precision with which Fox picks his routes down a slalom course. In general, he chooses the routes which least interrupt his stroke rate. Here are some of the principles that Fox and Langford learned through their analysis and which Fox uses to determine the proper route patterns:

1. Watch the paddler's helmet only and follow the trajectory of the helmet. See where the helmet stops and ask why.
2. Watch the blades; when they stop, ask why,
3. The exit from each gate is the crucial element; the way you approach each gate is determined by the exit you want. In planning for the proper exit, there are 3 considerations:
 - a. The direction in which the boat has to go.
 - b. The speed with which the boat should go.

- c. The speed of the rotation during the turn.
The speed of a complete turn is fastest when the turning is done all at once and with uniform speed throughout.
4. For a reverse gate, to determine the fastest exit, always put the bow under the pole under which the water is going fastest.
5. When it is impossible to get the ideal approach to an upstream gate that is below a drop -- like gate 22 in the Bala Worlds -- it's fastest to have the boat already spinning when it hits the hole at the bottom of the drop. The boat will turn right into the gate.
6. Offset gates: It's fastest when the stern follows the bow. If the stern does not follow, the boat sideslips instead, and you will be slower.
7. Analyze a course starting with gate 30 and working backwards. Since the exit from the gates is the most important, it's most efficient to plan backwards.

Targets

Fundamental to the Langford school of slalom analysis is focusing your thinking so you know exactly what you intend to do. "Error is the difference between the intention and the result," Ken says. "To understand what the error is, you have to have a precise intention."

Take a man throwing darts at a board. He'll do a lot better if he aims precisely at the bull's eye and not just at the board generally. It's the same in slalom. It's not good enough just to go through the gate; you have to know within an inch or so where in the gate you should be.

Thus, Fox does drills such as passing exactly 6 inches away from all the right hand poles on a course. If he's 3 inches or 9 inches away, he has made an error and then goes back to correct it. He has to have very precise targets for all his work. In upstreams, it's not good enough to clean the gate; Richard has to be 6 inches from the pole, or exactly in the middle of the gate, or whatever.

By developing these targets, Fox is always working towards something, not away from something. You cannot start correcting until you have something to work towards.

Here, in Richard's own words is his advice on how to practice gate technique:

Rather than saying you can train at a certain time, work out what you will do in that session. If it is a gate session, decide before you get on the water what you are going to do.

Set a course that is aimed at improving your technique on staggers/reverses/breakouts (offsets/reverses/upstreams). Do a timed run over that course, trying to go clear rather than trying to go fast. Use what technique is natural.

Then work on improving that time by performing each section of the course in stages. Repeat each section several times until you can get it clear every time with your boat in the same place each time.

Aim to put your boat in a certain position in the gate, not merely between the poles. In this way you can work on a safety margin so that you are clear at all times. If you start working on this principle now, you will develop the habit of going clear even in practice when you are trying to improve your technique.

Practice repeating a section of gates several times without rest, counting penalties over a 3-4 minute period, equivalent to a full length slalom course. Remember that going clear on a 5 gate course is good only if you can do it 6 times correctly.

Planning

Besides the workouts stressing targets, the other really important thing Fox says he got from Langford was the idea of planning out everything immediately preceding the Worlds. Fox remembered from his 1977 experience how quickly everything transpired and so he was anxious to get better control over it.

You've got to make sure you're fully aware of what you're doing," he says now." The Worlds is your only chance -- make the most of it. It's so FINAL!"

Thus, for 1979, they planned everything out for the weeks preceding the event. They planned:

- Where to stay.
- What the workouts would be.
- What warm-up to use.
- The timing of the warm-up.
- When and how to look at the course.

All this left nothing to chance -- "nothing was unfamiliar," as Fox puts it. "It created an attitude."

The result of this was two-fold: at the team trials he was able to concentrate 100% while actually on the course but was very nervous standing around on the shore.

Fox was second at the first team trials at Grandtully, to Kerr. After this first trials race, he returned to the same kind of base work that he did earlier in the year, but did more high quality work -- more speed, rest. He was fifth at the second trials race in Bala. He had a clean run, but wasn't fast. It was a hard, technical course. Furthermore, the race was delayed an hour and a half and this really threw Fox off.

After the trials and before Jonquiere, he did a lot of intensive interval work. He also got on rough water as much as possible. He started racing Albert Kerr in practice sessions. Fox was doing 3 workouts a day now. He did timed runs as intervals, and generally repeated the base work that he had done in the January-February period.

He went to Ironbridge, which is a broken rapid with a tongue and eddies on either side of it, and did "times 8" here, using 40 second courses.

In doing "times 8" Fox would do one time through the course for a base time, then do as many as he could at that same time -- maybe 6, i.e. 6 courses, each consisting of 8 laps.

He attended a one week training camp in Grandtully which was very good. The sessions were competitive on the water and off, to see who could walk back to the top fastest and take another run.

After that, Fox went to Merano and won the race, beating Fauster. He had to pay some of his own way -- 50 pounds.

Four weeks before Jonquiere was the end of the really intense period. He now began to work on speed. He had a lot of coach support

during this period. Richard started doing 4 workouts a day:

- * On the canal, about 10-15 min. speed work with a lot of rest.
- * Circuits with Ken (but only when doing 3-a-days).
- * Short courses.
- * Full length courses: 2-3 runs, like a race. Perhaps after those, he'd do half-runs. "It was pretty anaerobic."
- * 10 min. total work in: 2 X (3 X 90 sec).

"I was on the go pretty much all day," Richard explains about this period. He was also pre-adjusting for Jonquiere now.

During this same period, Kerr used to do one workout, have an hour's break and then do another one. Then, he'd take a long break and come back and do the same thing in the afternoon.

Fox thinks Kerr should have tapered more for Jonquiere, and that if he had done this, he could have been 9 seconds faster on the race course. "The team race showed me how fast he really was," Fox says. "At gate 16 I made a mistake and he blew past me. I was already paddling as fast as I could go, but he just whizzed by and started moving off."

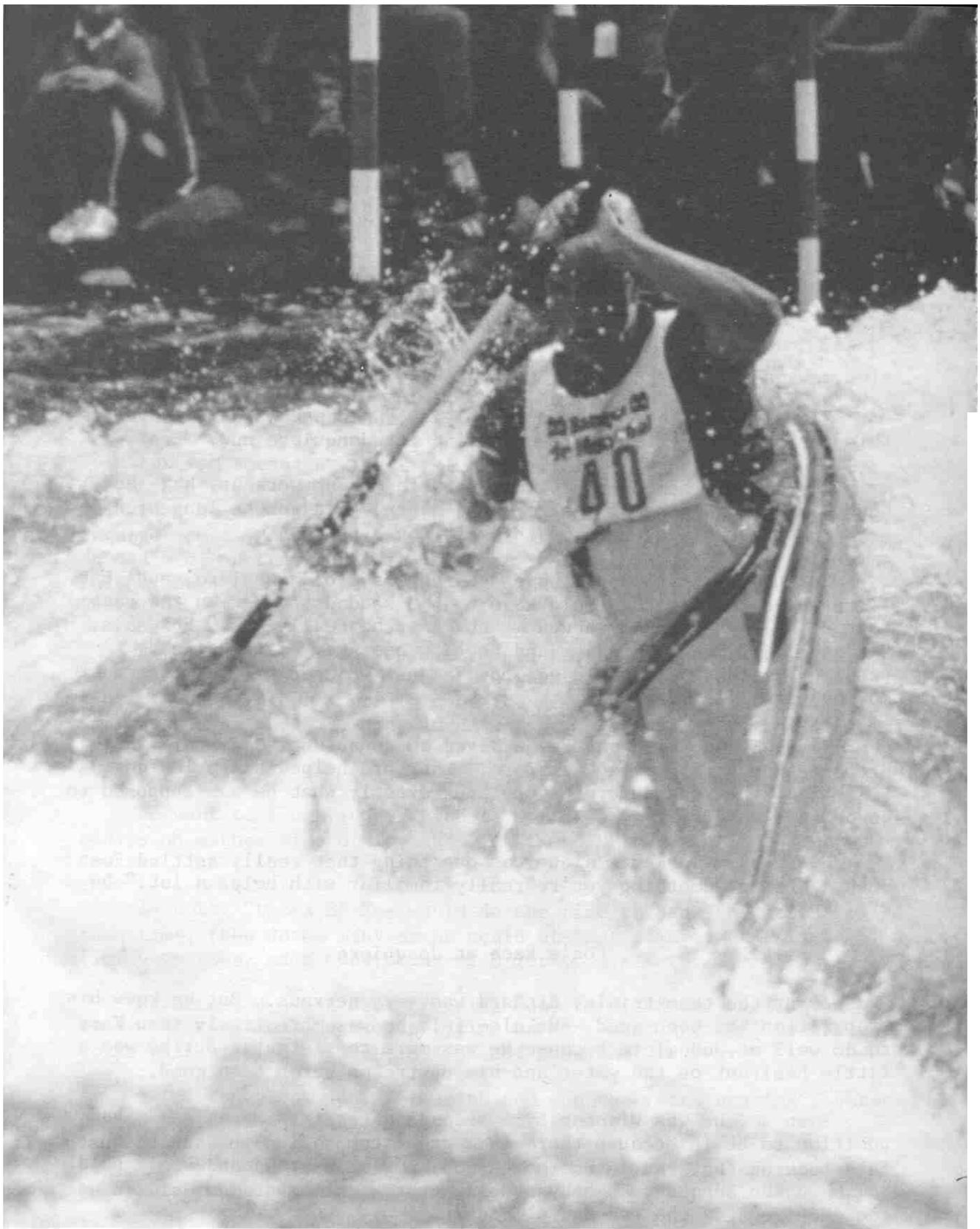
"I was dead tired when we arrived in Jonquiere," Fox said, but after 4-5 days he got back in form. Langford helped him a lot during this time. He made sure everyone knew exactly what he was supposed to do on race day.

Doing some workouts alone was one thing that really settled Fox down. "Doing something you're really familiar with helps a lot," he explains.

Fox's Race at Jonquiere

As at the team trials, Richard was very nervous. But he knew his preparation had been good. He also felt he was more likely than Kerr to do well at Jonquiere because he was more consistent. But he was a little hesitant on the water and his upstreams weren't so good.

Even so, he was winning by 5 seconds after first runs -- "a bad position to be in because there is a great temptation to want to just fall back on that run, even though you know it was bad and won't hold up." On the second run, he was doing pretty well, but just slowed up too much towards the end and placed 3rd.



On the way to the top: Richard Fox was Bronze Medalist at Jonquiere en route to winning the Worlds two years later at Bala. (Will Summers Photo)

In retrospect, Fox believes this result was a "fair reflection" of what he had been doing all year. At the time, he was upset at not winning, but feels pretty good about it now.

He wrote in his training log the following description of his second run:

Went better. A bit too low on 6, but right back up. Great down to 13. Not too bad 14, 15, 16; still, not great. But then seemed to ease up. Didn't open up. Held back. 18-19 slow. Good cross 21-22. Close to pole: backed off and hesitated. Lost time by holding back, frightened. 211.47. Knew I would not win but very upset to see it on the scores. I had the ability and fitness to win but not the strength of mind AT THE EVENT or CONFIDENCE on the water. In that context it was my best. Need more mental stability. Roll on '81!

But after winning the team race two days later he wrote:

Felt great. Didn't know whether we had done it, but most fantastic experience. 4 clear runs. I now felt pleased, it was all worth while and I would do it again.



Richard Fox at Jonquiere, where he was Bronze Medalist in the individuals, and World Champion in team. (Bill Cacciolfi Photo)

In looking ahead for the future, Richard cited the following things to work on:

- * Strength improvement without losing flexibility.
- * More explosion at critical points on course. Confidence to go for it.
- * Competitions to find out what I am capable of.
- * Breakout (upstream) explosion and fast exit.
- * Experiment with more breakout lean in certain places.
- * More rough water gates.

1980

In October, 1979, Fox enrolled in a physical education course at Birmingham University. He had no gates right in Birmingham and had to drive 40 minutes to get some. Thus when in Birmingham, Richard cannot do as much gate work as when at Stone.

In the Europa Cup of 1980, he finished in a three way tie for second, placing ninth, first and seventh in the three races. He generally had fast times but penalties plagued him. Still, after that season, he was tagged as the favorite to win at Bala in 1981.

In 1980, Richard was given a \$10,000 grant for training and was allowed to take a year off from university to train for the World Championships.

Training for Bala

Richard's training for Bala was really "a progression from what I did for Jonquiere." The progression concerned both the quality of the work and the volume. For improved quality Richard did 23% more whitewater gates than he had done for Jonquiere. For improved volume, he increased his total hours of training by 48% for Bala over Jonquiere. Interestingly, the biggest change from 1979 to 1981 was his increase in out-of-the-boat training, a 179% increase. This in turn broke down to a 222% increase in aerobic activities, such as running, swimming, and biking, and a 142% increase in strength training. Furthermore, the strength training was done throughout the year in 1981, whereas in 1979 it stopped completely in April.

Decreases came in flatwater gate training, downriver training, and river playing.

Richard Fox

1980-81

(Training time in minutes per week)

Week No	Date	Total Training	Water Training	Athletic Training	White water Gates	Flat water Gates	Down river Training	River Play	Strength	Games Runs, Swims Biking
1	10/6/-10/12	893	333	560	150		183		280	280
2	10/13-10/19	666	238	428	15		223		220	208
3	10/20-10/26	920	465	455	270		195		215	240
4	10/27-11/2	1095	900	195	870	30			120	75
5	11/3 -11/9	890	650	240	600		50		210	30
6	11/10-11/16	1150	735	415	580		155		120	295
7	11/17-11/23	1005	490	515	390		100		225	290
8	11/24-11/30	723	328	395	328				120	275
9	12/1 -12/7	1102	407	695	220		187		340	355
10	12/8 -12/14	864	559	305	374		185		235	70
11	12/15-12/21	950	415	535	415				370	165
12	12/22-12/28	540*	190	350	190				180	170
13	12/29- 1/4	720*	195	525	195				325	200
14	1/5 - 1/11	582*	60	522	60				150	372
15	1/12 - 1/18	550*		550						550
16	1/19 - 1/25	1035*	75	960	75					960
17	1/26 - 2/1	824	240	584	215		25		40	544
18	2/2 - 2/8	828	352	476		302	50		60	416
19	2/9 - 1/15	943	594	349	504	40	50		110	239
20	2/16 - 2/21	541	270	271	240	30			130	141
21	2/22 - 2/29	575	270	305	255		15		205	100
22	3/2 - 3/8	758	345	413	345				140	273
23	3/9 - 3/15	987	635	352	500		135		195	157
24	3/16 - 3/22	1315	1120	195	780		250	90	195	
25	3/23 - 3/27	960	765	195	765				195	
26	3/30 - 4/5	1260	1105	155	1060		45		115	40
27	4/6 - 4/12	1080	930	150	780		150		150	
28	4/13 - 4/19	482	437	45	407			30	45	
29	4/20 - 4/26	940	785	155	785				155	
30	4/27 - 5/3	364	304	60	264		40			60
31	5/4 - 5/10	865	780	85	660		120		85	
32	5/11 - 5/17	945	760	185	700		60		185	
33	5/18 - 5/24	1127	902	225	825		77		225	
34	5/25 - 5/31	531	531		531					
35	6/1 - 6/7	820	710	110	680		30		110	
36	6/8 - 6/14	510	510		390			120		
37	6/15 - 6/21	690	540	150	540				130	20
38	6/22 - 6/28	650	605	45	500		105		45	
39	6/29 - 7/5	545	470	75	410		60		45	30
40	7/6 - 7/12	630	570	60	465		105		60	
41	7/13 - 7/19	395	305	90	45		100	160	50	40
42	7/20 - 7/26	Worlds								
	Total	33250	20875	12375	17378	402	2695	400	5780	6595
	Change from 1979	+48%	+16%	+179%	+23%	-8%	-3%	-31%	+142%	+222%

* Shoulder injury prevented full training load, especially on gates

There was, however, one big negative for Richard in 1981, a severe tendonitis problem in his shoulder. It took six weeks to heal and during that time he was unable to do much gatework. The problem really started in 1980 where Richard first noticed the symptoms on the water. Finally during the winter of 1980-81, it got so bad that he went to see a doctor, and when that did not produce results, he got acupuncture treatment.

The nature of the acupuncture treatment is interesting. Richard had to make many trips for the treatment. The first sessions were generally to test the dimensions of the problem. Then, treatments were given over many weeks, starting with twice a week and then growing less frequent. The pins were put in various places, arms, and legs in addition to the shoulder. Now Richard sees the acupuncture expert whenever his shoulder problem flares up again.

Gate Sessions

Fox's gate training took place in 3 locations: at Stone, at other whitewater sites, and at Bala. Recorded workouts started in October of 1980. After a few sessions in which there was no objective other than to paddle around and get re-acclimated to gates on moving water, Richard moved into more structured work. Generally, he worked out on the Stone gates on the Trent River during the week days, when few other paddlers were around. About one afternoon a week, he would go to other whitewater sites, such as Matlock, Clywedog, Oakamore and Ironbridge. These places could be reached very easily for an afternoon workout. Gates would have to be set up and taken down each time. On the weekends Richard would go to a full length whitewater river, usually the Treweryn in Bala. He went there 10 times in 1980-81.

"In 1981 I did a fair amount of gate work with Ken," Richard says, "especially in Bala." During the week, he would see Ken 2 or 3 times. But instead of working on technique so much as they did in the past, now they worked on conditioning more, and consistency. Based on the 1980 season, Richard felt he did not have quite the control he needed. Looking back on his career, Richard feels it progressed in the following way:

- 1979 - He got consistency.
- 1980 - He got speed but was erratic.
- 1981 - He got control at the higher speed.

Stone Gates

The following are typical gate workouts Fox did on the Stone gates in 1980-81. They are listed here in a chronological order, thus showing how Richard focused on technique and endurance in the beginning and gradually shifted over to speed endurance, and speed at the end.

* S-turn and breakout (upstream gate) technique.
Lasted 80 minutes. Finished off with 10 minute continuous gates.

* 1 hour slalom endurance:

1. 16 laps steady = 20 minutes
4 laps hard = 5 minutes
4 laps steady = 5 minutes
4 laps hard = 5 minutes

2. 16 X 30 seconds with 10 seconds rest.

* 90 minutes breakout technique. On a gate where you have to stretch for three strokes, it is as quick and safer to use more strokes and keep speed on.

* 50 minutes slalom endurance:

1. Warm up 20 minutes.
2. 10 X 4 gate figure 8 breakouts.
10 X 4 gate figure 8 reverses.
10 X 90 second course continuous.

* 90 minutes slalom endurance:

1. Warm up 20 minutes.
2. 30 second circuit locomotor; i.e.,
1 fast, 1 slow; 2 fast, 2 slow; 3
fast, 3 slow; 4 fast, 4 slow; 5
fast, 5 slow; 6 fast, 6 slow; and
back down again. 30 minutes.

Rest 10 minutes.

Repeat.

* Slalom endurance

1. Warm up.
2. 4 X 240 sec. course, 120 sec. rest.
3. 8 X 90 sec. course, 45 sec. rest.

* Speed endurance

1. 10 mins. warm up.
2. 2 sets 6 X 45 sec., 15 sec. rest.
3. 2 sets 10 X 35 sec., 15 sec. rest.

* Speed

1. 6 X 90 sec., 90 sec. recovery.
2. 8 X 65 sec., 85 sec. recovery.

* Speed gates

1. Warm up 15 mins.
2. Practice 113 secs. + 0.
1st run 105 + 0.
2nd run 104 + 0.
Three min. recovery after each.
3. Split runs, 30 sec. rest half way:
54 102 +15
54 102 + 0

* Speed gates

1. Warm up.
2. 6 X 60 sec., 120 sec. paddle recovery.
3. Rest 5 mins.
4. 6 X 45 sec., 90 sec. recovery.

* Speed gates

1. Warm up.
2. 4 X 60 sec., 3 min. rest.
3. Rest 15 mins.
4. 8 X 30 sec., 2 min. rest.



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Speed through precision is Fox's formula for success, not just precision in the gates, but precision in all aspects of his training. (Abbie Endicott photo)

OTHER SITES:

The following are examples of workouts Richard Fox did at other sites, which consisted of only one rapid.

* Clywedog

1. 5 X 50 sec., 2 min paddle back to start. Work on tight full spin reverses.
 2. Breakout (upstream) practice. Repetitions over 5 gates.
-
1. 4 X 6 gate sequences.
 2. 2 timed runs.
 3. 2 runs concentrating on long bow pull. Rest of session concentrating on S-gate and breakout (upstream) entry.
-
1. 4 X 15 gate course. Times: 62; 62.9; 58.6; 60. All clear.
 2. Team work on cross-overs and follow round.

* Matlock

1. 10 X 60 sec. course. 30-40 sec. upstream resistance.
-
1. 5 X 2 min. course, 3 min. paddle up.
 2. Easy 10 mins.
 3. 15 X 30 sec. circuit, 30 sec. rest.

* Wheathampstead

1. 20 min. warm-up.
 2. 10 X 4 gate figure 8 breakouts = 322 secs.
 3. 10 X 4 gate figure 8 reverses = 340 secs.
 4. 10 X 90 sec. course continuous = 990 secs.
 5. 2 X 50 sec. course, 20 sec. rest.
 6. 20 X 30 sec, sprints, 15 sec. rest.
-
1. 20 min. warm-up.
 2. 2 X 260 sec. course, 70 sec. rest.
 3. 4 X 150 sec. course, 45 sec. rest.

4. 10 X 60 sec., 20 sec. rest.
5. 4 X 150 sec., as before.
6. 2 X 260 sec., as before.

* Oakamore

1. 15 min. warm-up.
2. 20 mins. of 30 sec. sequences. Emphasis on control and entry into breakouts and spins in waves.
3. 15 minute play around.
4. 30 sec. courses.

* Ironbridge - circuit session

1. 6 laps = 204 sec.

4	= 142
4	= 142
2	= 68+5
2	= 68
1	= 30

* Wheathampstead

1. 12 X 45 sec. straight course (no loop).
progressive rest: after each run take an additional 5 sec. rest, starting with 10 secs. and ending with 60.

* Symonds Yat - speed gates

1. Warm-up.
2. 3 X 80 sec. course.
3. 5 min. easy paddle.
4. 3 X 80 sec. course.

TRAINING CAMPS:

During the fall and winter, the British team, not just Fox, had weekend training camps about once a month. Six of these were at Bala, another one at Grandtully in Scotland, and they all were better than ever before. At the camps times were compared between boaters. According to Ken Langford, however, this was not too useful because there were big fluctuations in the times: some people would not take the camp seriously, stayed up all night before it and did badly the next day. The next time, they'd take the camp seriously but someone else would not.



Wain, Fox, and Kerr, the winning combination in the Bala K1 Team race. (Kevin Clifford Photo)

The British did not get in as much time at Bala as they wanted because they could never tell more than a few days ahead of time when there would be water. After April, they could not get word until a few hours before the water came on so there were no more national team training camps. However, Fox and Langford were able to go to Bala 4 times on their own after April, since Bala is only 2 hour's drive from Stone. Furthermore, both team selection races were at Bala, so Fox had even more exposure to the river there. Langford set the courses for the team selection races.

A typical national squad training weekend at Bala:

SATURDAY:

8:30 am arrive.
10-11 warm up on water, figuring out the best way to do certain moves

1-2:30 pm 1. 5 X 40 sec. course.
2. 3 X 13 gate course,
3. Play in hole at bottom of course.

4-5:00 6 X 23 gate course (135 secs.)

SUNDAY:

9:30 - 10:30 1. 10 minute warm-up.
2. 3 X 135 sec. course. 135+30; 124+10; 120+20.
Time improvement due mainly to better entry into 2 breakouts. Slowing approach down. Getting maximum control. Brings home point about right speed in right places on this river.

11:30 - 12:30 1. 4 X short course. No times.
2. Remainder of session (20 mins.) varying approaches to breakouts.

2:15 - 3:15 1. 6 X 135 sec. course for time.
Object: 3 clear runs.

Another national team training camp was held at Grandtully, where Fox often did only 3 runs on a full length course as the workout, thus simulating a race situation.

A TYPICAL SESSION AT BALA FOR FOX ALONE:

SATURDAY:

- 11- 12:15 Working on full spins. Tending to turn too late at first. Must come out of spins fast.
- 1:30 - 2:30 Reverse in middle near platform. Worked over left to come back in - trailing right blade. Must work to secure correct presentation at last moment.

SUNDAY:

- 10:00 3 timed runs: 229+60; 217+0; 211+15.
3 - 4 Bottom stopper crosses and breakouts (upstreams)

DOWNRIVER TRAINING:

Downriver-type training changed in its emphasis during the course of the year from a preponderance of endurance paddles in the downriver boat in the fall, to pyramid sprints in the slalom boat in the spring, and finally to short sprints in the slalom boat in the summer.

Examples of each type of workout follow:

DISTANCE PADDLES:

- * 14 min. timed paddle in downriver boat.
- * 37 min. timed paddle in downriver boat.
- * 2 X 10 min. paddle in downriver boat.

ANAEROBIC SPRINTS IN SLALOM BOAT:

- * Warm up 15 mins.
 - 6 X 10 strokes.
 - 6 X 20
 - 6 X 30
 - 6 X 40
 - 6 X 60

Start on 2 minutes for each effort.
Very strenuous by 40 strokes.

Canal sprints in slalom boat:

1. 6 X 20 strokes, 120 sec. rest.
2. 8 X 10 strokes, 60 sec. rest.

Canal sprints in slalom boat:

1. Warm up 20 mins.
2. 5 X 10 strokes, progressive.
3. 4 X 60 strokes, 120 sec. rest.
4. 8 X 30 strokes, 60 sec. rest.



Extreme lean control is another one of Richard Fox's fortes.
(Riva Photo)

STRENGTH:

The strength sessions, which continued throughout the year, consisted of two kinds, isotonic and isokinetic. Often Richard would do both kinds in one session. In isotonic weight lifting, the resistance stays the same during the lift. It is done typically by lifting dumbbells or weights. An isotonic session for Fox included:

Bench rowing
Lat pulls

Bow rudder
Sit-ups with weights

In isokinetic lifting, the resistance varies during the lift. For this, Richard uses two machines, one for each arm, which are similar to an Exergenie. The machines are two 10-pound boxes, measuring approximately 1 square foot, out of which a rope extends. The more you pull on the rope, the harder the resistance. A dial on the boxes controls the initial resistance level. Richard sat in front of these machines on a bench with a footbrace on it, to simulate sitting in a kayak.

On the isokinetic machines, he did 2 types of workouts: isokinetic strength, and isokinetic endurance. For the former, he would do a set number of repetitions. For endurance, he would do interval work: he exercised for a set period of time, took a measured rest, and repeated the exercise. Here is a typical example of each session:

Isokinetic strength

Pull	5 X 10
Push	5 X 10
Sweep	5 X 10
Reverse	5 X 10
Bow rudder	5 X 10
Pull down	5 X 10

Isokinetic endurance

Pull	
Push	
Sweep	All of these 3 X 45 sec.,
Reverse	45 sec. rest between exercises;
Pull down	60 sec. rest between sets.
Bow rudder	
Pull	

In general, Fox did these weight sessions to make up for the fact that he did not have easy access to big whitewater. If he did, he says, he would not do so much weight work.

AEROBIC WORK OUTSIDE THE BOAT:

Examples of these include:

- * 1 hour basketball game.
- * 40 minute squash game.
- * 30 minute timed run.
- * 1500 meter swim, alternating between freestyle and breaststroke (about 30 mins).
- * 4 X 200 meter freestyle swim, 50 meters easy recovery.
- * 1 hour cross country run (not timed).
- * 10 minute easy swim.
- * Bicycle 12 miles.

FLEXIBILITY:

* 30 minutes' stretching.

1981 Competition Season

As a result of the training described above, Richard Fox had a very successful racing season in 1981. He won the Grandtully race by 10 seconds; the two team selection races at Bala by 17 and 14 seconds; and he won the race at Merano by 10 seconds.

1981 Worlds

Going into the Bala World Championships, Fox felt that if he paddled the way he had in the team selection races, he would win. He did not really worry about the competition because he had seen most of the top K1s and had thrashed them. Thus, he figured that if he had a clean run, he would win.

Did he feel great pressure being the favorite going into the race? "No, pressure's ok if you really feel you've got the ability to perform well and my results showed me I had that ability."

But later he admitted, "I didn't have the same confidence I had at the team selection races. At the selections I went hard, as though I'd had a really good first run. But at the Worlds, there was too much at stake to do that. But I could have paddled at the speed I did in the Worlds with half the training I'd done."

On first runs, Richard had 211.58 and 60 penalties.

Nevertheless, he figured that no one would be faster on second runs than he had been on the first run. He felt certain of being able to clean the course at that speed, and that would be enough to win, even though he felt capable of going significantly faster. The risk of penalties, however, was too great, he felt.

On the top part of the course, he was the fastest. Then he as quite slow and cautious at gate 24 reverse, a tricky move that caused a lot of problems for many top boaters. But he really won the race on gates 27-28, where he was 3 seconds faster than anyone else. This was the section of the river that he had studied meticulously in the fall. His final score: 211.94.

Richard's own description of the race follows:

Knew I could do it on second runs. Did not feel too desperate although I was not in the position I wanted to be in.

All splits ok except for one section. Went away to relax. Next 2 1/2 hours took ages. Read, slept, and relaxed but forced myself to wait.

I knew I could go clear and wanted to get it over with. Not as nervous as I was at Jonquiere but still bad enough.

Second run warm-up procedure the same. Auto suggestion: "relaxed, powerful, confident."

Achieved ambition: Champion of the World 1981.

Could not have accepted anything else.

Emotional release was terrific.

But self-congratulation was not Richard's style and almost in the same breath he wrote:

But you can do better. More rough water ability and confidence needed. More speed. Better preparation, i.e., two clear runs. Must improve ability to relax.

And so in 1982 he was off in pursuit of the Europa Cup, a prize that had eluded him in 1980. After limited training in Britain, since he was back in school again, Richard went to America for 5 weeks where he got the whitewater experience he desired. After a poor start in the Cup, (sixth place at Tacen) he came back to win it.



Richard Fox, Champion of the World: "Emotional release was terrific."
(Kevin Clifford Photo)

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