

Coach's Corner *by Chris Crain*

Stretching for Kayaking

Remember when you were young and could spend all day running, jumping, throwing balls, etc ... all without stretching beforehand and without hurting afterwards?

Well, bad news ... those days are far behind us! As we get older, we get tighter and stiffer. If you're at all like me, stretching is often an afterthought, though a regular program will keep you on the water longer, more often, and with greater enjoyment. Probably helps with other activities, too.

Ideal programs include regular stretching of major muscle groups. Sadly, that's not me, though following are links to two comprehensive kayak-related stretching programs that are worth a look. Warm up a bit ahead of time, and pick some stretches that work for you.

The first link features a chart showing a full range of mostly land-based stretches, though I typically don't do more than the upright ones, #'s 1-7, prior to paddling.

https://www.bask.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/other4_stretches.pdf

This second link is a multi-page set of kayak-related stretches, with pictures and brief descriptions.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=kayak+stretches&client=safari&hl=en-us&prmd=sivn&ei=dPkAWcLEIMGMjwPnnYy4Dg&start=10&sa=N&biw=1024&bih=729#imgrc=KhqkidxVhKbXYM:>

In my case, I typically start with a few land-based standing stretches, later some stretches once sitting in my kayak.

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Photos below aren't of me, but show three stretches I typically do just before taking off.

Shoulders/torso 1: Put your elbow under your chin, use your other hand to pull the elbow around to the opposite shoulder, also rotating your shoulders and torso in the same direction. Hold for at least 20 seconds. Repeat on other side.



Shoulders/torso #2: Lift your arm up and put your wrist behind your head use the other hand to the wrist toward the opposite shoulder, also stretch/bending your torso in the direction that you are pulling. Hold of at least 20 seconds. Repeat on other side.



Torso stretch with paddle leverage: Sit upright, holding your paddle in front of you. Take the right paddle blade, reach across the boat with it, and plant the blade on the kayak's side beside your left foot. Look over your left shoulder to the stern to add stretch to your neck and shoulders. Hold the stretch with firm, continuous pressure for at least 20 seconds, not forgetting to breathe. Repeat on the other side. Once finished with this, sit up straight and then fold your body forward over your cockpit as far as you can, to stretch your hamstrings.



Photos by CarolynD.

Then enjoy the paddle and do a bit of post-paddle stretching to avoid stiffening up.

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