

# Who Are We As Coaches?

George Fell asks who are we as coaches... what do we stand for and what makes us tick?

While we're coaching, our brains are busy trying to work out how best to help the paddlers in front of us. I don't think we have time on-the-job to think about the key questions that underpin our coaching. If we're going to work out our own answers to these questions, we'll need to commit some thinking time.

Inevitably we'll all come at this from different directions. Different things will be important to us and we'll all have different answers to questions. A load of the strength within our community of coaches comes from diversity; from accepting that we are all different, that we will notice different things and value different things.

### Getting Started

If pondering imponderables is your thing then crack on! For me when faced with these questions they're too big and it takes me ages to get started, let alone get anywhere with them. One way to get us up and running is to think about a couple of other coaches you know and look at how they differ. In effect you're making coaching top trump cards.

Another way is to think of three real-life coaches and play odd-one-out. That is, look for ways in which two are the same and one is different. Can you come up with different factors that change who the odd-one-out is? Please have a go at these tasks before reading on.

In both of these exercises, we're not

actually that interested in the coaches.

We're interested in what you notice, what's important to you. What did you choose as the row titles on your top trump cards? What factors jumped out at you in the odd-one-out? The two pairs of cards shown below surely tell us more about what's important to the person who wrote the cards than they do about the coaches depicted on them.

Once you've chosen those factors that are important to you - whereabouts do you sit on them? What would your coaching top-trumps card of yourself look like?

There are some more ideas to get you started on the British Canoeing 'Your Philosophy' e-learning package, found at [britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/resource/paddlesport-instructor-elearning](http://britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/resource/paddlesport-instructor-elearning).

**Coach Top Trumps**

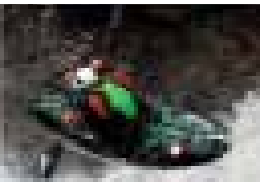
**Salty McSeadog**



Friendliness	3/5
Reflection	4/5
Honesty	4/5
Humility	4/5
Inspiration	3/5
Listening	2/5

**Coach Top Trumps**

**Gerry McGnarr**



Friendliness	4/5
Reflection	2/5
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**Coach Top Trumps**

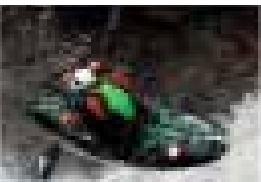
**Salty McSeadog**



Coaching Experience	5/5
Coaching Experience	5/5
Paddling Ability	3/5
Paddling Experience	4/5
Guru Point	4/5
BC Awards	5/5

**Coach Top Trumps**

**Gerry McGnarr**



Coaching Experience	2/5
Coaching Experience	3/5
Paddling Ability	5/5
Paddling Experience	5/5
Guru Point	3/5
BC Awards	2/5

Now we're up and running, let's look at some more specific questions:

### What makes a great coaching session?

- Everybody engaged?
- Everybody having fun?
- Everyone getting some success?
- Lots of activity?
- Learners getting better?
- Learners respect me & value my input?
- Learners still better in a week's time?
- Focus on achieving goals?
- Focus on enjoying improvement?
- Great technical feedback?
- Great questioning?
- Great group dynamic?
- Learners working together to solve problems?
- Learners choosing the direction of the session?

- People know what they need to do?
- Session going to plan?
- The task matches the environment?
- Tasks are in context?

### What makes a great paddle?

- Everyone having fun?
- No epics?
- Just the right amount of challenge?
- Great supportive vibe?
- Slick paddling?
- Good decision making?
- Everyone in control?

Which of these questions are most important to you? What questions are missing from the list? Are your beliefs about learners and learning any different to your beliefs about people and how we get on with one another? Last question: is

who you are as a coach the same as who you are as a person?

If your answer is completely yes, then are you adapting what you do to match your learners as much as you could? If your answer is absolutely no, then do you really completely change for different learners or deep down is there a kernel of values, beliefs and behaviours that is core to you and stays with you whoever you're coaching?

Even more than usual, I'm aware that this coaching corner has asked questions rather than provided answers. If it helps to share or discuss your answers, I'll pop a few of the questions and a link to some articles up at the coaching corner facebook page at [fb.me/coachingcornerscotland](http://fb.me/coachingcornerscotland) and we can hopefully get a conversation going.

**“I hope that by having a firmer idea of who we are as coaches, and what we stand for, we can come to recognise the coaching situations where we’ll thrive.”**

I hope that by having a firmer idea of who we are as coaches, and what we stand for, we can come to recognise the coaching situations where we’ll thrive and those where there will be a tension between what the situation demands of us and what we feel is right. We

can recognise the pleasure of working alongside learners and coaches who share our outlook. We can accept that some learners will have a completely different perspective to us, but will still learn; other coaches will have completely different viewpoints to our own, but will

still help learners get better. And of course none of this stays static; we change as do the paddlers we coach.

Thanks very much to Matt, Bruce, Jess, Zoe, Jonny and Cara for helping to shape this article. In the next one we’ll look at decision making; our own and our learners.

COACHING

# Coaching Matters

Coaching Matters is a programme of one day courses across Scotland, delivered in partnership with SportsScotland National Outdoor Training Centre, Glenmore Lodge. Attendance at Coaching Matters counts as Coaching CPD, valid for three years.

This year we will continue the theme of getting to know the paddler and how to aid them on their learning journey. This

will include critical areas of information gathering leading to how we then decide to run the session(s). This will ultimately bring us to looking at how we as coaches make decisions about 'how' we coach. Throughout the day there will be coaching input and discussions in all craft with implications for the various environments we paddle/coach and lead in. Find out more at [canoescotland.org](http://canoescotland.org)

**Dates**

- 18 April: Pinkston Watersports, Glasgow
- 30 May: Lockerbie Manor, D&G
- 20 June: East Lothian Outdoor Learning, Musselburgh
- 21 June: Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore
- 28 June: Willowgate Activity Centre, Perth
- 26 September: Sea Kayak Oban, Argyll & Bute
- 27 Sept: Muirtown Scout Hall, Inverness

# Community Of Learning Events

These British Canoeing Awarding Body, two-day events are designed for well-practised and experienced coaches who wish to refine and further develop their coaching practices. They can be accessed as stand-alone events to support your ongoing learning and development, and are also linked to the new performance coach qualification helping coaches on this pathway to progress.

The events will have a very different look and feel about them to what you're used to from coach training; with no

fixed syllabus it is up to the facilitator team to create an inspiring programme to help you further your knowledge and understanding of a wide range of relevant topics. Book early and you'll be able to influence the content if you've got topics that you want to explore.

The idea is that you get to share these events and the learning with other well qualified and experienced coaches. The opportunities for learning with, and from each other being a core principle that will underpin the style of learning.

These events are open to qualified

performance coaches, coaches on the pathway to completing their performance coach, and anyone else with a coaching qualification (e.g. Coach Award, UKCC L2, MWE or AWE or BCU Level 3/5). The only other prerequisites are Membership, first aid and safeguarding training.

Attendance at the event might be the inspiration and motivation you need to advance your practices; you'll also get to 'dip your toe into' the new Performance Coach Qualification and may wish to start on the pathway to complete this qualification.



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