Hanging Draw

I have been fortunate enough to have been coaching kayaking and canoeing across the country over the last little while. Since the introduction of the revised Star Test syllabi during January 1996 I have been aware of some confusion over hanging draw, a technique that was not previously included in the award structure.

During this paper I will discuss my ideas about the technique. I plan to do this in three ways:

1. describe what happens to the craft during the technique,
2. outline the function of the stroke
3. coaching - top tips and handy hints for developing the technique

The technique works in a kayak or open canoe so the term craft will be used during the paper to mean either kayak or canoe.

Description

I have heard the technique described as both 'static' and 'dynamic' so which is it? The craft is dynamic as it needs to be moving (forward or reverse) the paddle is static as only slight movement of the blade is made during the action of the technique.

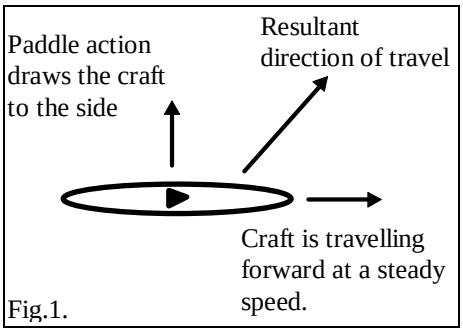

Fig.1.

Fig.1. summarises the action, the kayak is travelling forward at a steady speed. The blade is placed to the side of the craft and angled slightly similarly to the sculling draw. The craft is drawn diagonally and gracefully across the water. The craft should keep pointing forward and should not turn to one side.

Function

I describe this stroke as a 'touchy feely stroke' in other words my main aim with coaching this stroke is to enhance boat and blade awareness in the students. This will lead to improved control as the paddler progresses to moving water. They will be able to feel both the water and the action of the blade. This they will develop to work for them rather than fighting against the power of the water all the time.

Coaching

Although I have been able to accomplish the hanging draw for some years how it worked always used to be a bit of a mystery to me and coaching always proved troublesome. However, during the last eighteen months I think I have made some progress to enlightenment.

There are two basic ways I suggest coaching the technique. The best will depend on which you feel most comfortable with and the group etc.

Firstly, the kayak/canoe is paddled forward. The last stroke is on one side and the draw is placed on the other, see figure 2.

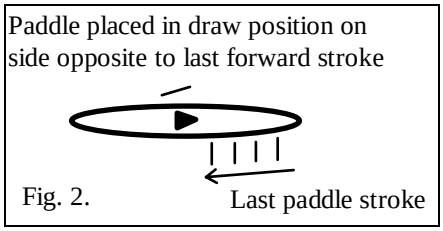

Fig. 2.

The problem that often results is the craft turning towards the paddle, as the last paddle action encourages the craft to swing.

Secondly, during the summer I was coaching a small group of teenagers and decided to try out a few ideas. I just showed the participants the technique a few times and asked them to play with it. This style of coaching follows ideas previously discussed (*Effective Learning* CODE Aug.96). the pupils made progress remarkably quickly. Then I spotted one of the group getting excellent results, yet he wasn't doing quite what I asked. The craft was paddled forward. The draw was placed on the same side of the craft as the final stroke (fig.3). This required that as the final forward stroke neared its end it was sliced out and round. I'm sure that sounds complicated but actually it's not too bad.

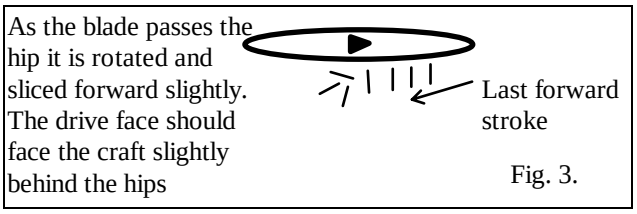

Fig. 3.

This second method does appear to be easier for most (but not all) people to learn. I suggest this is because:

- the action of the blade counteracts the turning motion of the craft.
- with method one I often found that the craft had turned due to the effect of the last stroke before the paddler had time to place the blade on the other side. This method allows the paddler to concentrate on one side.

Blade Position

One of the most common problems associated with trying to learn this technique is that the craft turns because the draw blade has been placed to far forward and is acting more like a bow rudder. The blade will usually need to be placed level-5cm behind the hips.

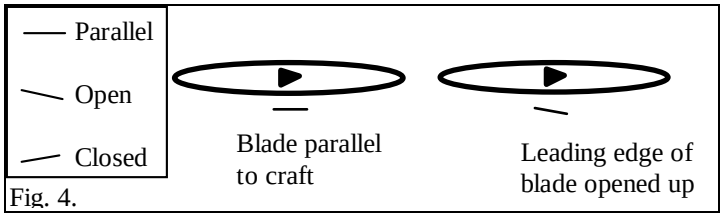

Fig. 4.

Blade Action

For the blade to draw the craft across the water the leading edge of the blade needs to be opened up slightly (fig.4). This is where the touch and feel of the blade comes into play. Encourage the blade to be placed parallel to the craft and then gradually be opened up. If it is opened up too much or too quickly the craft is likely to turn.

During the learning process there is another little trick that can be used if it helps. If the craft is still turning onto the blade slightly during the action, the paddle can be swept into the stern so as to counteract the swing. This takes place at the end of the technique as summarised in figure 5.

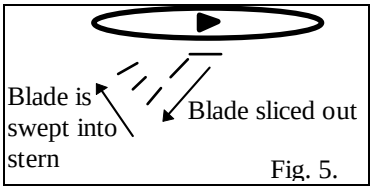

Fig. 5.

If the craft turns away from the blade, the final forward

stroke is too powerful. This will induce a turn away from the draw. Get the paddler to try it at a slower forward speed with a much less powerful stroke as the final.

Body Action

I find it helpful if the paddler edges the craft away from the blade (fig 6) once the draw action has been placed. I think this achieves two things:

1. a curved hull is presented to the water aiding gliding through it.
2. turn induced by edging opposes the turning effect (if any) of the paddle.

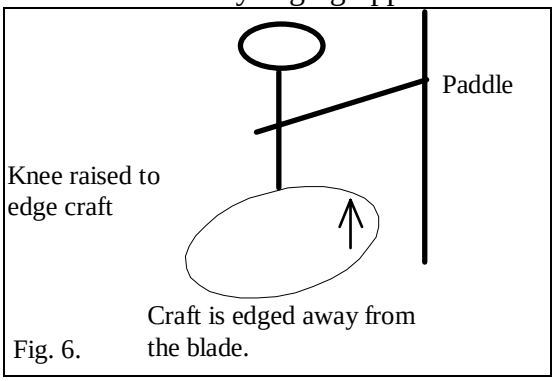

Fig. 6.

Summary

I hope these notes are useful. There are further points for consideration, but those outlined here are enough for present. Importantly, go and play with these ideas and find out what works for you.

Although I have worded the paper in a way that applies to kayak or canoe, some of the diagrams are more kayak based. I feel that the improvement of my coaching technique has been made possible by spending time thinking about it in my open canoe. In a canoe you have a different viewpoint on the blade which make subtle adjustments easier. Often it will also be the case that an open canoe will track more easily (not turn so much) and so make the technique easier to learn.

Have fun.