

Low Brace Turn (Canoe Focus April 1997)

I am as guilty as anyone. I have had a lot of problems trying to understand why my clients have difficulty applying the low brace turn on their first attempt at moving water. Invariably it ends up with at least a wobble over the eddy line and often a capsizes. Does this sound familiar?

The Low Brace Turn is a safe turn for the introduction to moving water. The turn provides stability and support over the eddy line. Can you remember your 1st low brace turn (LBT) on moving water? It probably felt anything but stable. I would like to take a few minutes to explain a possible solution. To do this I feel it is important to study the way it is often taught.

I believe that breaking the technique down into its composite strokes can lead to problems, if it is not approached from the right direction. I think that this can be remedied by altering the order in which each of the composite strokes is coached.

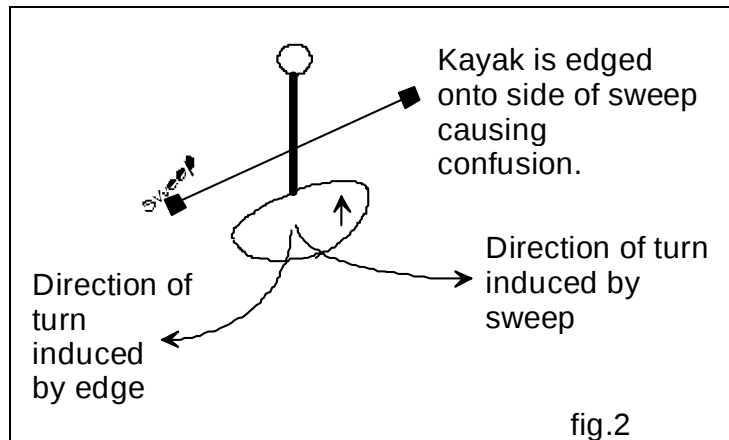
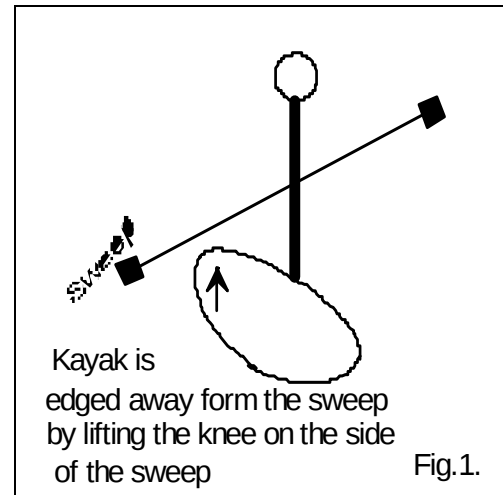
Traditionally the Low Brace Turn (LBT) is coached as: sweep, edge, low brace. I can see myself now, shouting these instructions to those desperately trying not to fall in.

The initial question to be answered is: during the sweep phase what should the edge on the kayak be? Onto or away from the sweep?

I believe that the edge should be away from the sweep (Fig.1.). However most novices do drop their edge when placing the sweep which gives them problems when they need to alter the edge as they need the low brace. The result is that the novice has to change edges mid technique which is not only tricky for the novice but also another factor to think about.

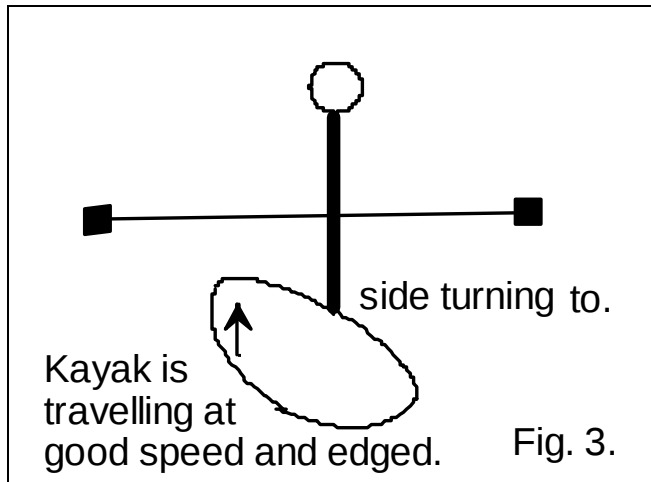
A novice who dips the kayak towards the sweep of the LBT is allowing two problems; the first is that it is difficult to change the edge resulting in at least a wobble as they cross the eddy line, second the edging of the kayak will also help induce the turn. If the kayak is edged towards the sweep the turn is induced against the direction of that sweep. Confused? Your kayak will be too. (see fig.2)

If the kayak is edged away from the sweep a turn in the desired direction will be induced from the start.



So next time you are coaching the Low Brace Turn try thinking of it as: edge, sweep, low brace. In this way the edge is held constant through the stroke, which in turn makes the stroke more stable. There is a slight drawback; the sweep is more difficult do when you are edging the

opposite way. So this needs practising on flat water. It should also reflect the way we teach and coach the sweep stroke. The sweep stroke is arguably the most important building block for other strokes. It is therefore important that the learner is aware of its importance from the start.



paddle with good speed and apply edge to the kayak (fig. 3.). The second stage is to maintain the edge and complete a full sweep (fig. 1.) and thirdly still keep the edge maintained and move the paddle across the kayak into a low brace (fig. 4.).

I find this works for me, but you'll need to make your own mind up.

I have played with this a lot in general purpose and white water kayaks. What I would like to do is spend some time on it in an open canoe

Summary. The low brace turn is often difficult to master partly due to the fact that it is often the first "technique" taught to the novice white water paddler. The LBT requires the linking of several strokes which can often prove challenging given that the concept of linking strokes is often alien to the novice. Think about learning to drive where a conscious thought is required to change gear, look in the mirror, steer etc. The same problems of too many things to think about at once occur with learning techniques in canoeing. Therefore every step should be taken by the coach to enable the learner to link the strokes

To coach an effective LBT paddlers need to

