

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The publication of this book fulfills a dream I had some years ago. I wanted to write both a comprehensive history of international whitewater competition and a training textbook for elite racers. Finally, after about ten years, the dream has come true, although technique and training methods are like boat designs -- always evolving. I am constantly reminded of something Ken Langford, British national team coach from 1964 to 1979, once told me: "Bill, you can write down 90 percent of the way to the top, but the last 10% will never be written down until it's historical."

The target of the book is the advanced racer who wishes to become elite, to finish in the top five at the World Championships. I believe the book is unique in this aim. I have assumed that the boater who uses it will already be familiar with all aspects of racing.

Other fine books have been written for beginning kayaking, the best one being Jay Evans' Kayaking. Very recently, Eric Evans and John Burton have come out with a book called Whitewater Racing which is the best book for the beginning racer that I have seen. But to date no truly comprehensive book exists for the elite racer in any language. The reason, obviously, is the small market and the poor prospects for making money.

Some racing texts exist in German, although they are either out of date or not as comprehensive as I believe mine to be. Two of the best German texts are Kanusport, by Karl Heinz Wozniak, an East German publication, and Kanuslalom, a recent West German publication, written jointly by Juergen Gerlach, Ulrike Deppe, and Karel Knap.

Kanusport was originally written during the mid-1960's. There has been an attempt to update it in 1974, but the book is still seriously out of date. Nevertheless, for format and history of technique it is excellent and a book well worth buying, even today.

Kanuslalom, published in 1979, is richly illustrated with photographs. It contains a great deal of information about training principles, but it appears to be very theoretical. Furthermore, for some reason, there is not a word or diagram on boat and stroke position in gates, which I believe is 90% of what slalom is all about. Still, the sections on training and the photographs make the book a good buy.

Not only is the target of my book unique, but I also believe my philosophy of training is significantly different --which only goes to show that there are many ways to approach the subject. Most of the training literature I have read seems to focus less on what goes on in the boat and more on what happens in the weight room or gymnasium. I believe that boat training is by far the most important part of training, and that what you do outside of the boat is really less significant as long as you paddle year-round (including the winter, too) in good facilities. You can increase strength through specific kinds of boat training. You can get endurance through another kind of boat training. And you can get flexibility from boat drills, too. But besides working on these specific areas, you are also getting increased familiarity with the subtle nuances of boat handling in gates, which is crucial to winning.

This is why I have emphasized boat training rather than other kinds of training in this book, although I have listed specifically what four World Champions and one near World Champion have done outside the boat.

What does it take to be a World Champion in this sport? A good high-school athlete, training year-round for five years with other athletes in good facilities, under the direction of a perceptive coach and supported by peers, family and community has an excellent chance. Tamper with any of these variables and the chances become less certain.

Behind that statement, however, lies a great deal of complexity. This book is an attempt to organize, articulate, and reduce to teachable principles the complex elements of success at the highest levels of whitewater slalom.

I could not have produced this book alone. Before I could write about the making of a World Champion, I had to be involved in the process. Through coaching for Washington, D.C.'s Canoe Cruisers' Association, I have had that great privilege. The CCA has had five World Champions and placed a boater in the elite (top five) of every one of the five slalom classes. Our training program has functioned like a laboratory and in a real sense, this book is our final "lab report."

The whole book has been read and critiqued by many people, many of whom have either been World Champions or very close to it. Their comments have contributed importantly to the book, and I owe a great debt to them. First, I would like to thank Kent Ford who saw conceptually that it is impossible to teach slalom through a text book and that the best I could hope to do was to sensitize someone to be able to get more out of observing elite boaters. Much of the format of the book, the diagrams of gate sequences and the sequential photographs, for example, resulted from his suggestions. I also owe the greatest debt to

Jon and Ron Lugbill, Bob Robison, and David Hearn, who, along with Ford, helped me to better describe the complexities of upstream gates. We went over the problem many times (once for seven hours straight) before we finally thrashed it all out. Each of these other people made comments which are reflected in the book:

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| Cathy Hearn | Becky Judd |
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| Dan Isbister | Tom McGowan |
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| Jef Huey | Paul Grabow |
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| Jamie McEwan | Craig Law |
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| Bill Carr | Pat Kingman |
| Mary Ellen Hammond | John Sweet |
| Dave Curran | Linda Aponte |
| Russ Nichols | Bill Gannon |

Now is also the appropriate time to thank a large number of assistants who have helped me run workouts and collect data which is useful in improving training. These people are: Ed Gertler; Mimi Hayman; Gordon Bare; Bob Brockwehl; Lee Larsen; and Steve Draper. There are many others who have helped, too, and if it were not for them, it would have been impossible for me to have compiled the data and opinions which form the basis of the book.

Various employees of the Federal government have facilitated our training over the years and without their help we never would have been so successful. Employees at the David Taylor Model Basin, especially Sgt. Nathaniel Jones, Dick McNamara, and Jane Wooten have been a great help in the winter. Bill Kirby and Ed Duffey of the U.S. Park Service have made it possible for us to set up whitewater slalom courses in national parks. It is not often that federal employees get thanked these days and I would like to set that straight.

I also had a great deal of assistance in the editing and preparation of the book, and in fact it would have been an impossible job without it. Dan Hutner, a writer for National Geographic was my editor and reviewed the book several times, making many valuable suggestions. Nancy Watson, also of

National Geographic and especially Don Morin handled the typing of manuscripts. In Morin's case, he headed up a team of individuals who typed onto a computerized typewriter, thus making it easy to change the wording without having to redo the whole manuscript. Key members of this team were Bob Alexander and Dan Isbister who, along with Morin, spent untold hours typing the drafts, entering corrections and making many useful suggestions for the format of the book. I owe them the greatest debt of all. Since making changes was so easy, for the first time I was able to change the wording many times until I finally felt that it was right.

Two CCA chieftains, Merle Garvis and George McCormick have over the years given me the utmost support and encouragement with whitewater-related activities. This has helped to organize our training program and make it more efficient. I take this opportunity to thank them and point out that they are "unsung heroes" who helped to win the Worlds.

Finally, I owe a great debt to my wife, Abigail, who has pored over the book at all stages and made heroic efforts to prepare it. It always seems to happen to me that these books become "a fight to the finish", what with impossible deadlines to meet and impossible amounts of work to do. Thanks, Abbie, for helping me through another one!

W.T.E.
Washington, D.C., 1980