



The Drummer's Role on a Dragon Boat

Does the drummer make a difference?

Races are often decided by milliseconds. One of the most overlooked potential advantages is the most obvious; the drummer. A good drummer makes it easier for the crew to paddle its best and puts them on the path to victory.

Calling a great race is not simply hitting the drum at the proper time. In fact, the drum has very little to do with it. The drummer should not simply be the lightest person; he or she must have a loud and clear voice and should not be shy about using it. To be effective the drummer must be part of the team, he/she must know the race plan; know the team's strengths and weaknesses. The team must be used to the voice at the front, and what the extra weight feels like. The drummer should know how to paddle because it makes a world of difference on race day.

Only the drummer can see everything. Timing is the most obvious problem to identify, but the drummer can identify if the paddlers are reaching far enough, looking up, sitting up all the way. The drummer, coach and steersperson have to work together to develop a race plan and a system of signals to put the race plan into action.

How should a drummer call a race?

Attitude is contagious, so the caller should be loud and confident. Nervousness and uncertainty can kill a crew's morale. It isn't so much what you say, but how you say it. Keep it simple, clear, honest and positive.

Good motivators:

This feels great!
We're moving!
We have ___ meters!
Stretch it out...That's it!
Sit up tall...That's it!
You have lots of energy!
Give me more!
Timing!

Avoid comments like these:

Don't Panic!
We're out of stroke!
They're catching up!
We're slowing down!
Paddle faster!

A good drummer can put a good team on top. By focusing on technique, good strokes, pacing, intensity and the race plan, in a positive tone, the drummer has the opportunity to bring out the best in the crew.