

Advanced Single Blade Clinic

by

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Brent Summerfield and I are planning to teach the advanced single blade clinic this year on the Ocoee River. The river choice is subject to change based on the participants' skill levels and water levels at the time of the clinic. Any time you push yourself in Class IV rapids in an open boat, the possibility is there for a swim so we will hold the clinic May 1 and 2 to take advantage of the warmer weather and water.

There are several skills that I believe separate intermediate paddlers from advanced paddlers. These skills include the ability to read water features and use them to your advantage, the ability/willingness to use cross strokes in challenging situations and the ability to choose the most effective and efficient strokes for the situation you face. Given these beliefs, the focus of my clinics has been to:

- Improve the variety and quality of the participant's strokes so they get the most out of them while reducing the risk of injury,
- Improve their ability to read water and use the different features to their advantage while executing moves,
- Broaden the range of strokes they are comfortable using in challenging situations, and
- Improve their choice of strokes based on the characteristics of the water they are paddling and the moves they are trying to execute.

I have found the Ocoee River to be a good river for practicing technical moves in big or pushy water. Many of the 'lesser' rapids provide opportunities to apply the abovementioned skills without significant consequences and you get the thrill of riding through the big rapids as an added benefit. However, not everyone is comfortable on the Ocoee in a canoe or C-1 so we are willing to use other rivers depending upon the skills and desires of the participants.

The NOC's standards for advanced clinic participants are a good gauge for judging if you are a good candidate for this clinic. They consider you an appropriate candidate for an advanced clinic if you:

- Paddle Class III rapids consistently and confidently,
- Have paddled Class IV rapids some in the past year,
- Lead others down Class III rapids,
- Can perform crisp ferries, eddy turns and peel outs in Class III rapids,
- Attempt difficult moves that challenge you,
- Are an aggressive paddler, and
- Perform off-side strokes effectively.

It is helpful if you have paddled the river(s) we will use and are familiar with the rapids, but that is not a prerequisite. Some degree of comfort paddling Class III+ and Class IV rapids is necessary if you are to benefit from this clinic. For more information or to get answers to your questions, I can be contacted through the CCC e-mail list or at (828) 258-3296.