

**Chris Brain 00:00:13** Hello and welcome to the coaching podcast. My name is Chris Brain and I'm joined here with Jamie Greenhalgh today. If you're wondering where Lee Pooley is, our usual host, he has handed over the reins to me for the next 12 months. So I'm going to be taking over diving into all things coaching related on the water focusing in on the technical aspect. And today we're talking with Jamie about white water kayaking. So hi, Jamie.

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:00:41** Hi, Chris, thanks for having me along to the podcast. It's really nice to be here in this chat with you.

**Chris Brain 00:00:48** Thanks, Jamie for saying yes to doing this so I know a bit about you. I've seen you on the water loads over the years. We've been on the water together, but for anybody who's listening who isn't familiar with who you are. Do you want to just give us a little overview of who you are, what you've been doing and what you do with your coaching?

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:01:05** Sure, so I have loved white water kayaking specifically for over half my life now. I'm 32 and I got going with it and about 14 down a little water sports centre in London. For those of you who listened to the podcast with Dan Wilkinson and on decision making he referenced a trainee scheme in London and we were part of the same one. So already you've got a scoop.

So I got into white water initially through a coach who said hey, would you like to try out a slalom race that I'm going to and I did a little bit of that, moved on into opportunities to do white water trips and basically fell in love with it. I started working and kind of before I knew it I was teaching White water kayaking which has been the big pastime the big joy and I still go White water kayaking personally for myself. Last November, I was on the Zambezi and just before that I was on a trip to Chile to paddle sections of river that I really, really was excited for, and found all of my challenge zones and my why for paddling but at the same time coaching white water has a really big part to play in what makes me tick on the river. I started my own business teaching White water kayaking with a friend who then sort of left the business and I've just carried it on and that's been going for six years

now. So there we go. I've been working coaching people on the river and pretty much full-time for a good while and still loving it every bit as much as I always did and when you talk about the technical and tactical aspect of paddling it's going to be a really interesting one because I feel like it's changed a lot over the years and my opinions and the things that are important to me have changed a lot over the years as well.

**Chris Brain 00:03:14** Great, and I'd love to pull that thread a little bit and ask you about what you think's changed as well. But the thing that I think is great about having you on the podcast is you are absolutely active on the water. You are on the water all the time. You're always coaching. You're out there doing your own trips. So you've absolutely got the experience and so much to bring to what we're going to chat about today. So if we can I'd love to dive straight into it and to get chatting and I think today it'd be really useful to talk about things that maybe novice paddler as a newer paddler's to white water things that we might coach with them all the way through to some of the more advanced paddlers as well because advanced paddler was like yourself are still out there getting coaching on the water as well. What do you think of the most important skills that a coach could develop with a new white water paddler?

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:04:05** So, with a new white water paddler, we're going to have quite different challenges than with an advanced white water paddler. It's a good question to ask and mainly it's because they're going to have very very different capabilities and very different challenges. So when somebody's new their problems are often going to be with their balance and them feeling settled in the boat their problems are going to be with their forward paddling their ability to make the boat go where they want it to their problems are going to be to do with the way that they understand the currents that they're moving in and out of and how to plan their routes down rapids and generally those are the threads that are most often pulled on when it comes to the introductory sessions. So when somebody typically if somebody would come on a white water core skills introductory course with us the things that we end up playing with are a) I love learning on the journey and for me if I can what I will aim to do is find a section of flowing river that I know no matter how early stages in development somebody is in they will be able to be kept safe

while we create a nice place to learn for them. And what that does is going to give me an opportunity to assess them and figure out what their natural strengths are because no two beginner white water kayakers are alike some will come with a background in gymnastics or downhill mountain biking or anything particular that actually will end up creating amazing transferable strengths that once you've identified you'll go Okay this is amazing. We can build up on that strength there. So for instance if somebody has been a really high-end downhill mountain biking racer, actually they begin with really strong balance in the boat and really good awareness of how they can isolate their upper and lower body to create different shapes in the hull of the boat so that if they're crossing a flow they're able to just hold a particular edge in the water hold the position and paddle without that boat rocking and just by doing that they are already 3 steps ahead. So there is an element when you're teaching novices where we have to figure out first of all what existing skills they have that are transferred from their life. And then we can figure out what we build on.

**Chris Brain 00:06:43** Yeah, that sounds amazing and I love the idea of the transferable skills. I think that's really interesting. That's certainly something I'm going to consider a bit more in some of my coaching that I've got coming up soon.

When you're thinking about getting a beginner started then with those skills and you've assessed a little bit of what they're coming with and what they're bringing and is there anything that you typically might start with any exercises that you usually do to maybe find that out or to get them going with that breaking and breaking out and the edging like you mentioned?

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:07:15** Yeah absolutely. So there's a few exercises that I will often do just to get things moving. And one thing that I think is just really really useful to be able to do if you've got a section of flowing maybe slightly wavy white water would just be to say follow me as I make my way down this section of river and what I'll do is I'll set a bit of a zig zaggy course nothing too challenging but one where they're gonna have to hold their boat in a direction, they're not able to just float down with the river and just by giving them the challenge of holding my course at a zigzag I'm able to assess whether they are

being proactive with their paddling whether they're able to put their blades in the water and generate a little bit of power to hold them on line and I'm also going to be able to assess their balance and their mindset as well because the most nervous paddlers will not do that. They will allow their boat to drift forwards on the downhill angle and they'll basically use backwards or bracing paddle strokes to try and obtain the outcome. So that's a really nice challenge and a test. The other thing that I like about it is it is going to encourage the behaviour that is positive which is then proactively paddling forwards in the water. At the same time, the classic movements of breaking in and out are going to be really really useful to play with. So for instance if we can find a jet of current with nice eddy service on either side, it'll be really useful to be able to give them some practice opportunities with that and give them some pointers when they're moving across the current. What I don't think I would like to do is spend a really really long time on that on their first session because one thing that we know about beginners is that the time that they fall in the most is when they're going through those spin points, beginners flip because the boat spins.

**Chris Brain 00:09:22** I was just gonna say I find that really interesting. I incorporate that in my coaching as well and I think so often we can focus as coaches on prioritising breaking in and breaking out but like you say though those spin points and those are the things that make people fall in aren't they? So do we want to give them that technical skill? Or do we want to let them almost avoid it and sort of play around it really and then come back to it. I suppose that's the balance that we as a coach have. Sorry, you were going to add a bit more then....

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:09:53** That's okay. Yeah, but yeah, you've elaborated on what I was saying in the perfect way really and that as coaches we're being really strategic about the tactics that we focus on for that paddler at a given time. And this is a really good example of it. if we've got somebody who in fairness is really struggling to hold their boat going in the direction that we want it to we know that they're going to really struggle with uncontrolled spinning and when they struggle with uncontrolled spinning, then they're going to also struggle with flipping quite often, so I'm going to facilitate them working on

that skill but also I don't want them to spend a huge proportion of their day flipping so it's something that we are going to come back to at various different points and we're going to kind of be quite strategic about when we focus on the different skills that are the main thing that's challenging that paddler trying to keep them in the zone where they're challenged and they're able to focus on their learning but there not in the drink all the time and wasting a lot of energy and becoming quite demotivated. I've got another example to back that up which is from the opposite side of the spectrum for more the intermediate to the advanced paddler.

So typically when we help paddler's to go from consistent on grade three to consistent on grade four the things that are tripping them up aren't so much their balance and aren't so much their ability to hold their boat straight or it kind of is their ability to hold their boat straight, but it's now one of the problems is that difficulty of white water means that they're having to go through lots of pieces of powerful current that are diverting them constantly in different places. In order to hold their boat straight with their paddling in that context they need to have developed a far more balanced powerful paddle stroke, so their forwards paddle stroke doesn't need to just be powerful for the pull phase, which is the typical beginner's stroke, its needs to be powerful from an extended catch position, so right by the bow of the boat, through the pull phase and then it needs to be able to finish with power as it passes the hip in some cases so one of the most useful advanced skills is going to be being able to deliver a paddle stroke that is powerful all the way though its course and that takes a lot of core tension, it takes really well developed ability in somebody to add up lots of different usage of muscle groups into their forwards paddling to hold that pressure and it then also takes an ability to choose where you put your blade in the water in which piece of wave in which piece of current. Now we could get our beginners started on learning that as soon as we can and we do to an extent. But is that what's flipping them over?

**Chris Brain 00:13:04** That's a good question!

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:13:05** One of the things that I think I learned through a bit of experimentation one day, it was just after we opened after COVID and I just said to myself

I'm going to throw away any ideas of what I'm going to coach and I'm gonna ask myself what's flipping them over and work on that. And it just so happened, I was doing mostly beginner sessions for that summer and I didn't teach forward paddling once. It was very strange and yet winter happened, I got into the advanced sessions. I was like, right we actually need to work on forwards paddling now because this is what's flipping you over.

**Chris Brain 00:13:44** It's really interesting that idea of forwards paddling, because that's something I know from observing you out on the water that you've been working on you've been developing and I know that you've got lots of ideas on it. I would have thought that for a lot of white water paddlers as soon as they've got that idea of forwards motion, they probably feel like they've really got it, they can make their boat go forwards they've got that forward stroke and as coaches, we always talk about keeping moving with it keeping developing it constantly refining it but I think for a lot of paddlers it's quite hard to know, what does that actually look like and the things you've just mentioned are really useful I think. Are there any drills as a coach or any sort of coaching tools that you might use that you think would specifically help people to develop their forward stroke. Maybe they could do it with a coach or if they're listening they could just try it themselves on their own bit of water.

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:14:40** I mean there are a million different potential drills that somebody could do to help them develop connectedness through their body into their paddle stroke because that's gonna be the key to being able to deliver power all the way through the stroke and make sure that we are able to carry that blade pressure through the whole thing. I would say that one of the biggest keys is going to be in the foot pressure because firstly they are a really really powerful extension of our leg muscles, some of the most powerful parts of our body but really critically they are the point at which our body physically connects to our kayak. So they really are the gateway to power transfer in the boat. So if we release foot pressure, then we know that we're not quite getting as much out of our forwards paddling stroke, driving through the kayak as we possibly could. One thing that I would suggest somebody who wanted to develop their forwards paddling could

practise is looking at when they are putting in place and releasing their foot pressure relative to when the blade comes through the water.

Typically, I'm gonna just go out and say it, it's going to be the same side that I push with my foot as I place my paddle in the water, so right foot right blade. As I reach forwards to plant a paddle I'm going to start engaging that right foot to power the boat through the water. Next question is going to be when do you drop the foot pressure and when do you let go of the stroke and actually one thing you can try as someone who really wants to maximise the amount of core pressure and power transfer they are putting through their boat is to say, maybe we are going to try out not dropping foot pressure almost ever and if I take a right stroke I'm going to hold right foot pressure until not just until the right stroke is finished but until I'm ready to put the left stroke in the water.

**Chris Brain 00:16:55** Wow, that sounds really interesting because I'm just thinking now about what that would feel like in the boat because as you're talking about it, I'm thinking do I do that or do I not I'm going have to go out on the water and find it out. But I'm thinking that that would really help people hold that core pressure which is going to help improve their glide doesn't really matter what moves they're doing or if they're just going straight down the river that is going to really help to maintain the direction of the boat as well. Is that what you think the outcome is from that?

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:17:24** Yes, yeah for sure and when you say it's going to help them to improve their glide that keyword really lit it up for me because the ability to have a really well controlled glide phase inbetween strokes is really really key to white water kayaking, I do need to be able to generate power with my forwards paddling to get my boat going where it's supposed to go. But also we know on the river that there are key places like a wave, the curling piece of a water that comes off of a rock, there are key places where I know I actually have to get a particular blade in the water. The water is cushioning off a boulder and moving and flowing left. So I know that that's going to push my kayak left. So I need to put my left blade in the water to counter it as soon as I arrive in that place. Otherwise, I'm going to spin left and so if I know that there's a particular place where a particular blade has to be in the water, then I can't just paddle left right, left right in

cadence because I will always get it wrong. You would have to be counting back your paddle strokes like a drum beat all the way down the river and that's not possible. This is why it becomes really really important to learn to generate power and then to glide into a keystone.

**Chris Brain 00:18:48** Yeah, and the thing that I think is interesting is when we watch more advanced paddlers paddle or just people that you think have got a smooth style is they seem to be able to not necessarily paddle all the time but for their boat to be able to maintain that momentum constantly. It's not as if it speeds up and slows down. It just seems to keep moving and that's something I want to incorporate quite a lot in my own paddler is this idea of momentum still being generated and still going towards where I want to go and for me to be able to hold pressure maybe in my blade until the right moment the right time. That's really interesting to get us going. We've dived straight down that rabbit hole about forwards paddling, but thank you for that.

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:19:31** And it's led on to another discussion which is to do with what you were talking about about paddlers who say they've taken that key stroke and their now landing in the water and who were able to without necessarily putting in another one, though often you would and are able to then use gliding and use the way hold their boats edges to actually steer the boat and carve it into the next movement. So there's really advanced levels of edge control that can really add to your steering in the boat and at advanced level and at a beginner level as well.

**Chris Brain 00:20:07** That must be physical surely as well there's a lot going on in terms of what's happening with the body as well as what we've been doing with our paddle. Do you do anything specifically either yourself or in your coaching that helps to develop some of that core tension? It's a long piece of work isn't it, we can't just learn it on a day and then we've done it so how do we develop that over time?

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:20:30** So I think essentially through an element of just being a little bit dedicated to be honest. You will develop a few self-checks that are going to give you a thing to focus on when you know that you're thinking about having really solid

forwards paddling be it holding foot pressure and core tension be it keeping your top hand high so that also helps you to hold core attention through the rest of the paddle stroke to not let the stroke's pressure drop away in the last phase. That's another tip for you that you can focus on and you're not always going to have mental space to focus on these things. We know that when your white water kayaking there's a million things that get thrown at you regularly and actually having a thought process that says, right in this rapid I'm going to think about my feet may not actually lead to you paddling very well. What you can do though is you can in the gaps when you know that you've got the mental space because you're all over it in this moment. You can be thinking about those little self-checks that you've given yourself and when it does come to a difficult rapid what you probably will have is an identified set of targets and waypoints that you're looking to make your way to that are going to, to show you down the rapid and what you can think is, okay I've identified my target, I'm just gonna start as I mean to go on. I'm going to start with my little checks in place with a bit of foot pressure and then I'm going to give all my attention to where I'm going. Who knows I may naturally carry it on.

**Chris Brain 00:22:15** I don't know if we were kind of doing this already, but I'm interested whether you think that an advanced paddler needs a different set of skills or a broader set of skills than somebody who's newer to white water. I don't necessarily want to give it a grade but if somebody's operating on grade three four, maybe beyond rather than grade one and two, what do they need?

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:22:39** So they definitely need all of the same skills that are going to help somebody in grade one and two environments or maybe not grade one, but they need all the same skills, that's going to help somebody in grade two and three environments but they need them to be much more finely developed if they are accessing Advanced White water continuous grade four and beyond and then I would definitely say that the only essential skill is being able to roll from any position when the river is bearing down on you because if you are paddling class four continuous sections of river, it's your ability to roll up that keeps you safe. I mean, it's not a cover all but it is one of those skills that you'd be silly not to have if you are paddling in those sorts of environments constantly

continuous class three as well is and being able to pull off that roll under duress is going to be really really key. After that being able to pick a line make sure that you understand the river that's in front of you well enough to make good choices about where you want to put the boat and being able to deliver really solid keystrokes that help you make your way down the river are going to be key.

**Chris Brain 00:23:55** Yeah, and you mentioned about rolling there and that was something that I wanted to come on to because I think as a coach this can be one of the most challenging things to coach. It's often quite individual. Actually coaching is potentially quite difficult because people have a lot of time under the water. How many goes can they have before they need a break? I'd love to know what your approach is when it comes to coaching rolling.

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:24:18** So first of all, it depends on the context of the rolling session, is it a rolling clinic where the customer or has signed up or whoever it is that you're coaching not everyone's working for reward but the person has signed up for a day where they are working on their rolling and if that is the case then what we can do is we can drill quite finely into the detail of it and a win is always a win if you're coaching rolling by the way. So if they roll up our first thought is always high five well done and here is a tweak if we really need to give a tweak and but yeah if they are signed up for a full day's rolling clinic, then we can get into the technical details. We can talk about the way that their body moves to follow the sweep of the paddle across the water if we take a standard screw roll for instance. As their boat begins to roll the right way up the way that their body continues to turn to follow the way that the paddle towards the back third of the boat because all that will continue to work to keep that boat flowing the right way up and we can think about them setting up with their head as close to the surface and wrapped around the boat as possible to make the contortion of the sweep a lot easier and to give them better leverage. When on the other hand, I'm working with somebody and we're on a day out with aims that are completely various we have to acknowledge that one of the biggest factors in somebody's ability to roll is their bloody mindedness and their confidence in the roll in the first place. A roll is going to be a roll in that instance so every

time somebody rolls successfully it doesn't matter how slap dash that was a good one that worked excellent, and if you want to you can go there's one thing that you could do that I think that would make it smoother and that is when you complete your roll try to move your head to look at the paddle which is finishing its sweep. There's a couple of bits on rolling.

**Chris Brain 00:26:39** And what do you think of the key common points that people struggle with with a roll or what are the key points of failure? What's usually the issues?

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:26:49** Okay, so the key points of failure with a roll are going to be, there's a few different ones. The first and most common point of failure is panic and that somebody goes into the water and they are not used to being upside down in a moving water environment. They've not trained their mind to go through the motions of rolling that they've practised and for that one the best thing that they can possibly do is find as many safe locations to practise pulling off their roll as they possibly can. After that, there's going to be some technical ones that cause failure. One of them is if they set up with their body still too deeply under the water. Then as they sweep the paddle, the paddle will always dive, in order to drag that body out from directly underneath the boat. It's going to be an immense effort that will probably require a Pawlata in order to make it work. So one of the first tweaks that we can do is we can help somebody to go, right when you flip upside down and when you're setting up for the roll when you're moving your paddle into the set up position, I also want you to move your head into the set up position with it and that position is going to be as close to the surface as possible. Sometimes the tagline is "see if you can drink the sky before you roll up". After that the next one is about separate the movement of your upper body from your lower body, because although your upper body sweeps right for instance so if I tuck up to roll I need to sweep my paddle across the surface and that means my whole upper body together has to sweep to the right, my lower body needs to press to the left because my kayak needs to roll leftwards. So there's the big picture, the separation of upper and lower body. There's another not separation but combination that people fail to get which is combining their arm and paddle work with their chest and torso. If we can combine the arms and the paddle with the chest and the torso

so that all of those things rotate as one unit then we will have a motion that works to flip the kayak.

**Chris Brain 00:29:25** I think this is why people typically avoid it because it's complex, isn't it?

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:29:31** It is complex.

**Chris Brain 00:29:31** It's a challenging thing. I personally believe that every paddler has the ability to be able to roll. I know not everybody can roll but everybody has the ability to roll and I think the things you just mentioned are super useful. Do you often use a swimming pool or anything like that? Is that within your coaching repertoire or do you think that that's not a great venue to learn to roll?

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:29:55** I think a swimming pool could be an excellent venue to learn to roll mainly because it is incredibly non-threatening, people have been in swimming pools since they were three years old and most people feel pretty comfortable in a swimming pool. So I think especially where you know you're someone who isn't incredibly water confident and who is going to struggle with the idea of being upside down in a kayak. Starting inside the least threatening piece of water that we could possibly start in could be an incredibly useful thing for that person to allow them to begin to train their technical skills because you can't train the technical and tactical elements of a roll if you have a panic response, so if we can crack that first, that's great. However, if as many people are you're quite used to getting buffeted around in the sea, maybe used to be a surfer maybe you've already perfected your pool roll to an extent. The best thing you can do is find an area on a natural piece of river, sorry, or man-made Lee Valley will do and get to it and one of the things that's going to happen as soon as possible really is you're going to face distractions under water. The distractions under water could come in the form of flow, a little bit of force against the body that you have to put to one side and continue to roll. It could be that you notice that you're in shallows and that your paddle and maybe the top of your helmet has hit some gravel or something like that, another distraction for you to put to one side while you roll so although learning to roll in really

safe environments such as a swimming pool and such as really deep water is very necessary. We also want to practise rolling in distracting environments.

**Chris Brain 00:31:55** I'm really pleased you mentioned that because I think the transition for a lot of paddlers from that swimming pool roll to an on the river roll at whatever level whatever grade is often the challenge and I really remember that in my own paddling that I'd really nailed the swimming pool roll and it was quite a good number of weeks before it happened then on the river and there was quite a swimming in between that.

I'd like to chat to you while we've still got time about boofing because that's something that I think gets thrown around as a term quite a lot I certainly know people who perceive that boofing was only for an advanced paddler or high water, high grades, waterfalls and that sort of thing but that concept of holding your bow up, driving up and over the water and riding dry down a feature and obstacle, tell us more about it.

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:32:51** Okay, so obviously no complete list of white water kayaking skills could ever be complete without a mention of boofing, so-called because hopefully it's the sound that the hull of your boat makes on landing. But yeah, it's something that's really useful. The first thing that I'd say in response to your question is it is a skill for every paddler and it doesn't matter if you're an advanced White water kayaker where you completely depend on your boof or a kayaker on moderate White water who probably doesn't need to depend on it, but it's gonna open up so many more options even if you like going out on the sea, there's a place for the boof and generally as you drive up and over a wave good place to learn to boof actually that one.

**Chris Brain 00:33:42** I was just going to say could you break a boof down into a few key steps that people can maybe practise?

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:33:51** Absolutely. So the first thing I would say is rule one of the boof is take off from the right place. Make the take off point because what I've found through years of experience of teaching steep creeking courses is that when you get people to focus on the technical of how to boof they almost always completely muck up

the line and end up falling off the wrong place. So the first thing we need to do is make sure that we're going to be able to access the take off point so identifying the take off point is a key point. So we're scanning the river and we're looking for often the highest up wet bit. Say for instance you had a rocky ledge that was covered with water and the water was bouncing off that rocky ledge and spilling downwards along it we're aiming for a tactical advantage of taking off from height and an advantage of taking off from height, but being able to maintain our speed without having too much of our speed scrubbed off on the rocks. So we're looking to be able to identify a good take off point for our boof and then to actually be able to make sure that we're going to make it. I described earlier that we need to be able to incorporate a glide phase to the beginning of the boof. And so in order to do that we need to find our target. We need to generate a bit of momentum towards it and that momentum is going to allow us to confidently glide to the target while positioning the keystroke. So that's going to be step one or steps one through three which is just simply put it's make sure you get to the take off point. The next thing that we're going to make sure that we do is and when we find that take off point, we're going to make sure that we grip it with the paddle as early as possible so making sure that we were able to properly reach to convey power evenly all the way through a paddle stroke so that has an effect on the way that we reach with our paddle. If I reach forwards with my paddle by leaning forwards it is going to mean that I have a very top-heavy paddle stroke. It means that the first segment of the paddle stroke will be powerful and the back half will be really non-powerful because it will lead to me leaning back as I take off. So instead if the paddler can try to rotate their torso forwards so that their blade can contact the take off point by their feet that's going to mean that when they come to pull they'll be able to use that forwards paddling style that they've been working on which really drives the boat over the take off point. It should almost be that the paddler as they reach forwards with their keystroke they're winding their torso up and then through the keystroke they are gradually unwinding and finishing by winding up in the other direction and that all happens within the single stroke and that's how we convey pressure through the entire thing. On landing it's ideal if we can then reach forwards and again with that little bit of torso rotation to aid the reach so that we can land and have a blade ready to enter the water if we need it.

**Chris Brain 00:37:37** That is super useful for people to be listening to, I think you've really broken it down really clearly there and I know people are gonna be pulling technical points out of that which are going to be helpful for them.

We've got time for just one more question if we can and I read an article that you have written called 'embracing the chaos' and I just thought it really resonated with me and I thought it was superb and I'd love you just to give us a flavour of what you were talking about in that and how you input that in your coaching.

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:38:07** In my article I called it embracing the chaos because one of the things that I've been thinking about as a white water paddler and as a white water coach is what I see is a little bit of a mismatch between the way that paddlers practice which can be quite structured. We can go from eddy to eddy. We make our way down a river that we know well and you'll probably, paddlers will almost develop a routine from I'll go from top right and I'll come down this line that I know is well travelled and well-practised across into this bottom eddy and give myself the same pat on the back because it did feel good as I usually do and then I make my way and that practice style is really nice because it gives good feelings and I'm gonna develop confidence in my techniques. But one of the things that it doesn't do is it doesn't have anything like a representation of what it feels like to go White water kayaking on a big day out, on challenging rivers with a group of my peers. If it rains heavily in Snowdonia in my backyard, I'll go out with a group of mates and we'll hit a river like the Ogwen the Lledr the Glen and how it's going to look and feel is going to be so different to what I've just described on my local run that I've been practising that that practice might even feel like it becomes next to worthless. Suddenly the challenges that I face are more like I'm paddling a river. As I round the bend there's a new feature that I wasn't expecting and I catch up to one of my friends. I have to change course, there's a new rock that's moved or I'm on a new river and we're making our way quite fast down this section of white water trying to control our descent. I'm having to be really adaptive, really attentive to what's happening on the river. What's happening in the

environment what's coming up for me? I almost feel like playing a game of Temple Run would be better practice for that challenge than maybe what I had been doing, which is moving down down the Dee and catching the same two eddys on Serpent's Tail as I always do and then moving on. So that mismatch was what led me to thinking about the idea for the article for embrace the chaos and the idea is is there a way that we can make training for White water kayaking, feel a little bit more like the realities of going out on a rainy day with a crew of friends and paddling a section of challenging white water for the first time.

So that was the concept and then what then happened is I just went to the drawing board and did a bunch of experimental coaching and thought what exercises can we create or what exercises already exist that require people to really think on their feet and to vary their responses to what's happening, leapfrogging was one of the first things that I came up with which is a system of paddlers moving down the river, that has been around for a long long time, but we can also adapt it quite well in order to suit those aims. So the idea of leapfrogging for those and who haven't heard of it before is that a crew of paddlers will make their way down a river and they will take turns being in the front and the front paddler will after a short section they will eddy out and be overtaken by the next paddler who after a short section in the lead will eddy out and be overtaken. What's nice about it is that the front paddler isn't told where to go and definitely doesn't know which eddy they're going to want to hit before they spot it and the paddlers behind are in the train. They're making their way down following and they need to react to the movements of the front paddler and when they're out in front, they need to find somewhere to stop, that's actually a different version of leapfrogging then is taught a lot of the time. The other version which is much more common of leapfrogging is a static eddy to eddy system where we will have the paddlers off in a chain of eddy all stopped and then the front paddler is going to stop in their eddy. They will be overtaken by a paddler behind and they will be behind and then they'll overtake the front paddler, either of those are really nice because they require a bit of conscious thought and adaptation. So that's one thing but I think there's a lot of scope for different gaming variations essentially of paddling that require that sort of dynamic thinking so I do quite a bit of setting exercises as groups. I find that if we can set a group

of paddlers a course on a small section of white water to all paddle together around the same zone then what's going to be forced out is an element of chaotic nature because all those paddlers are going to be trying to make their course while paddling really close to each other and adapting and moving but also we're going to force them to be very dynamic with the way that they paddle as well.

Those are two examples where we are trying to change the way that we practise to actually make sure that it requires mental effort and that I'm not sure before I start any movement the direction that that movement's going to go and what that's going to do hopefully is mean that when I go out on a river that I don't know or a river that I do know but in different conditions with a group of friends and it's all happening and the environment is pumping, I'm much more able to roll with the punches and to adapt.

**Chris Brain 00:44:26** Wow, thanks so much for giving us a real flavour Jamie and that sounds really interesting to try and incorporate some of those exercises into your coaching. Thanks so much for coming on the podcast. It has been absolutely wonderful to have you on board and to hear your chat about all things white water kayak, so many golden tips there, really useful things for paddlers and for coaches so thank you very much Jamie.

**Jamie Greenhalgh 00:44:52** Yeah, you're welcome Chris. It's been a pleasure to geek out about kayaking.

**Chris Brain 00:44:56** Great stuff, thank you.