

# Sailing, training, growing together

A research on soft skills and the sport  
of sailing



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## Introduction

“Today, young people need a broad set of competences to find fulfilling jobs and become independent, engaged citizens. Increasing the level of key competences is at the heart of the European Education Area that we are building together with Member States – a space where all young people should receive the best education and training, regardless of their background.

Our knowledge, skills and attitudes are a major factor in boosting the EU’s innovation capacity, productivity and competitiveness. Globalisation, structural changes in the labour market and the rapid development of new technologies require us to develop and update skills throughout life. Critical thinking, media literacy and communication skills are some of the requirements to navigate our increasingly complex world. And digital skills, next to literacy, mathematics and science are the basis for lifelong learning. Innovation and entrepreneurship should be encouraged and promoted if we want Europe to compete in the global race. (...)

The European Commission works with EU Member States to promote key competences, knowledge and perspectives facilitating lifelong learning.

The EU Council have formulated the *Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*<sup>1</sup> adopted in May 2018 is an important step forward. It updates the 2006 Recommendation, taking into account the requirements of the world we live in today. It also goes further. Only describing the competences we should have is not sufficient. That is why the new Recommendation gives guidance and good practice examples to help us achieve our goals.

Countries need to provide more support to teachers, trainers and educational staff. They need to go beyond the boundaries of subjects, enable cross-discipline learning, cooperate better with businesses and further promote networking and cooperation with stakeholders. To promote entrepreneurship, every pupil should have at least one practical entrepreneurial experience during their school education. In addition, the ambitions of the UN Sustainable Development Goals should be mainstreamed into education, training and learning policies. All these practices can support competence development now and in the future.”

Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-on-key-competences-for-lifelong-learning\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-on-key-competences-for-lifelong-learning_en)

## Skills - what are we talking about?

21st Century skills are the most important abilities that today's young people need to succeed in their careers during the "Information Age".

Following the Research phase of the project, consortium members have found out a variety of key skills and competences on which their sailing coaching focus during training sessions. Thanks to the findings of the interviews with coaches; focus group discussions with students and coaches; inspirational interviews with sailors the project's research phase has collected a list of the key skills (details in the project research report).

Consortium members have met for the first transnational project meeting in Madrid on the 3rd and 4th June 2021 where they have discussed the above results. Given the current priorities of the EU and keeping in mind the most necessary ones of the 21st century skills the project consortium has decided to focus on essential key competences necessary for the development of young people.

The skills S4BF therefore elected as a key the "Entrepreneurship competence" that refers to the capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas, and to transform them into values for others. It is founded upon creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, taking initiative and perseverance and the ability to work collaboratively in order to plan and manage projects that have cultural, educational, social and/or financial value.

Within this context Sailing for better future project discusses 5 skills:

- Critical thinking**
- Creativity**
- Collaboration & Communication**
- Flexibility**
- Leadership**

These skills may be developed and enhanced through sailing; they are an essential part of modern lives; the skills are helping to shape character and strengthen the spirit of people without age limit. As a contribution of the project to the EU Council's Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, we believe that the above will serve as a good base for skill and competence development through the beautiful sport of sailing.

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## Definition of the 5 selected skills

1. **Critical thinking** is understood as the ability to find solutions to problems. This skill includes the ability to plan, work independently and with self-discipline, manage the time and stress and the ability to work under pressure.

In business and education settings, critical thinking is essential to improvement. It's the mechanism that weeds out problems and replaces them with fruitful endeavours. It's what helps people figure stuff out for themselves and solve any problem. It's solution focused approach, the way of attitude with which people may approach an issue and look at it as an opportunity rather than as an obstacle.

Creativity is the concept of "thinking outside the box". It is based on creative thinking, the ability to anticipate, react quickly and cope with difficult situations in original and innovative ways.

2. **Creativity** is equally important as the means of adaptation. This skill empowers people to see concepts in a different light, which leads to novelty. In any field, innovation is key to the adaptability and overall success of a company or organisation. Learning creativity as a skill requires someone to understand that "the way things have always been done" may have been best 10 years ago — but someday, that may have to change. Letting the mind see things from a different perspective, having the courage and belief to approach in an unprecedented or unestablished way requires courage, a sense of initiative and self-confidence as well.

3. **Collaboration & Communication** - skills used for working and communicating with others. Collaboration means getting people to work together, negotiate, express themselves, to listen actively, to achieve compromises, and get the best possible results from solving a problem. The key element of collaboration is willingness. All participants have to be willing to sacrifice parts of their own ideas and adopt others to get results for the common goals. That means understanding the idea of a "greater good," which in this case tends to be organisations' success.

Finally, communication is the glue that brings all of these educational qualities together. It's crucial for people to learn how to effectively convey ideas among different personality types. It has the potential to eliminate confusion in an organisation or workplace, which makes people with this skill will be valuable parts of their teams, departments, and companies.

Effective communication is also one of the most underrated soft skills and it's viewed as a "given," and some organisations may even take good communication for granted. But when people communicate poorly, whole projects fall apart. No one can clearly see the objectives they want to achieve. No one can take responsibility because nobody's claimed it. Without understanding proper communication, people in the 21st Century will lack a pivotal skill to progress in their personal and professional life. Being able to speak up, to express oneself, to talk about and speak clearly about one's needs and ideas are all fundamental basics to start with. On the other hand there is no success without good listening skills, without a partner/another party who is willing to listen actively! As they say: Two monologues do not make a dialogue. How one has a dialogue is more important than the subject matter of the dialogue.

4. **Flexibility** - The expression of someone's ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The ease or willingness to deviate from ideas or plans as needed. This is one of the most challenging qualities to learn for everyone because it's based on two uncomfortable ideas:

*Your way isn't always the best way.  
You have to know and admit when you're wrong.*

There may have been good practices that you knew before that may not apply anymore and shall be readapted to the circumstances.

That's a struggle for a lot of people, because it requires change. When things work well and in a smooth manner that people are accustomed to, change may not be seen as ideal or wanted, hence we know life does not work in this way.

Flexibility requires humility, humbleness and acceptance that there is always something to learn, something to readapt to and approach differently than the known ways before.

Flexibility is crucial to a people's long-term success in life. Acknowledging the fact that change is an indispensable element which can't be ignored is by itself a challenge.

To know when to change, how to change, and how to react to change is a skill that'll pay dividends for someone's entire life.

5. **Leadership** is someone's drive for setting goals, walking a team through the steps required, and achieving those goals collaboratively. It connects a lot of abilities like: strategic thinking, responsibility, planning, self-discipline, time management, problem solving, the ability to anticipate, react quickly and cope with difficult situations, stress management, physical and mental well-being, and working under pressure.

Everyone needs leadership skills for several reasons. The most important is that it helps them understand the decisions that managers, business leaders, people in relationships or individually make. This is where 21st Century skill learners can apply the previous skills they've learned and with the combination of the elements may strive for betterment in their own life and environment.

As people lead individual task forces and activities, they can learn the ins and outs of their specific capacities. That gives them the expertise they need to grow professionally and lead whole organisations. In business terms, it's called "efficiency." - The common goal of any professional working in a company — from entry-level employee to CEO — is to get more done in less time. That equips them with the practical means to carry out the ideas they determine through flexibility, leadership, and initiative.

## Skills development through sailing

### Definition of the 5 selected skills

The S4BF skills' set is an important part in the development of one's Key Competences. According to the European Commission's definition: "Key competences include knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by all for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship<sup>2</sup>."

Knowledge is composed of the concepts, facts and figures, ideas and theories which are already established, and support the understanding of a certain area or subject.

Skills are defined as the ability to carry out processes and use the existing knowledge to achieve results.

Attitudes describe the disposition and mindset to act or react to ideas, persons or situations.

Key Competences are developed throughout life, through formal, non-formal and informal learning in different environments, including family, school, workplace, neighbourhood etc. characterised by the cultural setting and social environment one lives in. All Key Competences are considered equally important and aspects essential to one, will support competence development in another.

For example, skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, team work, communication, creativity, negotiation, analytical and intercultural skills form part of one's knowledge and attitudes as well. Key Competences are interrelated and are essential elements and sources of an organic system.

### **Bibliography:**

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"The Three 21st Century Skills"

<https://www.aeseducation.com/blog/what-are-21st-century-skills>

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2 [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/school/key-competences-and-basic-skills\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/school/key-competences-and-basic-skills_en)

During the project development, sailing coaches from Poland, Italy, Portugal, Turkey and Austria shared their knowledge and experience to prepare this publication.

In sailing training most of the time the coaches and the sailors focus on the technical skills and development of their sailing abilities, but the sport and its particular practice develops during the practice other skills as well. The project consortium decided to support the skills development in a conscious way and add to technical sailing training a practical way to reinforce life-long skills through sailing practice in a more effective way.

The path followed to complete this research begins with the definition of skills, chosen after meetings and focus groups with athletes and professionals. We sought to select the most significant skills, those most stimulated in the practice of sailing.

Following the same method of interviews and focus groups, we then identified the moments when young people, engaging in sailing activities, most frequently use these skills. In this way, we mapped various characteristic moments of sailing, with particular attention to the application or stimulation of the selected skills, resulting in a list of activities and situations, both on the water and on land. These were described with a focus on educational and formative aspects that are "transversal" and not just technical.

We proceeded to gather the experience of coaches, consisting of methodologies and training practices adopted by each in their various contexts, to describe the path followed by the young athletes in preparing them to face the various situations already identified in the previous phase of the research. The methodology collected in this phase is rich in technical content, primarily aimed at the development of technical skills, but it encompasses important educational and formative aspects that are, in some ways, undervalued. It is precisely this part of the content that, through this research, gains importance and contributes to giving value to the work carried out by both athletes and coaches.

### *Examples of learning the skills through sailing:*

Then discussed what is the coach's role in this process and how they can encourage every particular skill development.

**Critical thinking** - tasks including fast decision making, like for example problems with equipment on the water, or on purpose we can send the sailors without some of the ropes, or rudder, hiking strap, etc.

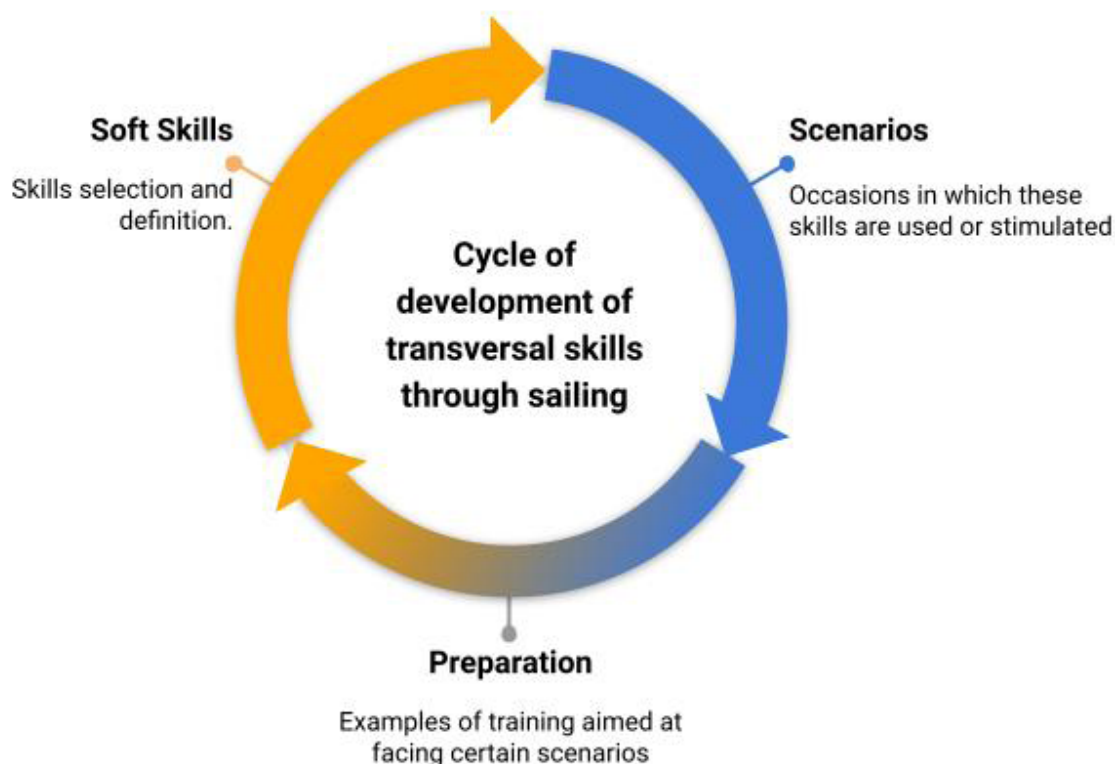
**Creativity** - Sailing from start to finish avoiding obstacles, passing others and getting to the finish line in sailing is a very creative skill

**Collaboration & Communication** - The best example is packing the boats for travel...

**Flexibility** - changing wind and sailing conditions require constant adaptation and flexibility in decision-making to adjust accordingly

**Leadership** - giving a leading tasks to manage all the team, or conduct warming up activities





In the next parts of this publication you will find the good practices and knowledge, experience of sailing coaches from Europe and beyond that builds this “European sailing program”. This is a program for coaches that, apart from the technical sailing training, focuses on the development of personal lifelong skills in young sailors through sailing training that goes hand in hand with technical and physical skills and helps to build mental strength.

1. How overall sailing training reinforces every skill;
2. Coaches’s role in skills development;
3. Exercises and activities for sailing training connected with particular skill development;
4. Inspirational stories - stories of young sailors and how sailing changed their lives and helped them in future success.



# Part 1.

# **How sailing reinforces S4BF skills**

## *Critical Thinking*

When a person is confronted with sailing for the first time, information and novelty overwhelm them. They are forced to put order and sort through all this novelty in such a way that they can make the best use of it. This process, although at the beginning is slow and sloppy, as the child or adult spends time sailing, it gets better and tidier. Thus the beginning of critical thinking begins and slowly becomes a lifelong skill, originating from the first day of exposure to sport.

Boats and people operate in a constantly changing natural context such as the sea, and this requires the analysis and monitoring of various aspects that can turn into critical issues that need to be managed.

The pace, timing and priorities of the actions to be taken are also dictated by external conditions, such as weather and sea conditions or the characteristics of the boat, which require continuous analysis and appropriate decisions to be completed before the problem degenerates to the higher level of complexity.

The management of a boat, in an environmental context that changes and varies continuously, is based on the more or less thorough understanding of certain physical laws. Understanding these operating patterns and using them while sailing, which also requires physical effort, is an ideal training ground for stimulating decision making and working under pressure.

The boat does not have breaks like a car so the need to foresee and anticipate what is going to happen and where the boat will be at every moment, becomes imminent.

There is constantly a general need for solving problems and deviating from a planned path.

It is a required combination that comes with the pressure. It's important to have the ability to assess that one's success can't be dependent on others' assistance to it and the exclusive goal of winning a race may not always be the sole aim to consider.

Every sailor must continuously manage situations in which it is necessary to make decisions and face the consequences. This context greatly stimulates the ability to manage and understand the error aimed at overcoming the obstacle.

The setting of the boat is also strongly influenced by the sea and weather conditions and each athlete must be able to evaluate, often in advance, what will be the best setting for that session in order to lead the boat in the best possible way.

The sport of sailing requires many hours of training, preparation of the boat and unrigging and this means that practitioners must manage their times well and organise with all the other tasks of daily life

## *Creativity*

If we separate the sailing sport into stages, we would have the pre water, on the water and after water sessions. In every one of those moments, we can see a clear need for constant creativity. Starting from the boats themselves, they mostly never remain as they were originally built. Every builder and every sailor, makes the boat the changes they consider better and are allowed by the rules, to better facilitate their usage and purpose be it on shore or water. That requires a creative use of available resources to adapt it to each person's necessities.

On the water, creativity also becomes an important component, which finds its expression in managing the boat in the waves, in particular gaits or in situations no matter if it's a daily training or regattas. It is not possible to stick to the plan at every moment.

## Skills development through sailing

### Part 1. How sailing reinforces S4BF skills

It is particularly linked to the adaptability that sailors develop with the experience of sailing and resolving the countless unforeseen events or situations that can occur in different circumstances.

In some regattas or in some situations, initiative and courage are very stimulated and often, once the obstacle is overcome, they cause very rewarding sensations and considerable self-esteem and self-confidence.

After sailing, there are also always problems to be solved. For example, fixing the boat, loading a trailer and driving back home, and so on. This also forces the sailors and coaches to be more creative. There are never two identical fixings neither we load a trailer twice the same way. We need to get creative to make everything on time and good. Creativity to be efficient. Afterwards, this is reflected in a perceptible maturation and awareness that can also be found in the relational behaviour on the ground among other people.

### *Collaboration & Communication*

In sailing we have different classes of boats, we can choose for example single handed boat or multi handed boats but to learn and succeed in any of them, sailors are in the need to develop and use collaboration and communication skills.

On single handed boats, taking as example an Optimist or solitary racing, each sailor needs to communicate first with himself to know what he wants and what he needs to achieve the goal no matter the difficulty of it. He needs to collaborate with the boat and nature around him to be able to do what he considers is needed in order to go where he wants to go.

On the other hand, it's known that nobody can do everything alone. So the sailor, although he decides to sail by himself, will need help from others to adapt the boat and to train at least.

Also for Optimist, we have the team racing, where working together aiming to win with a large workload can only be carried out efficiently in good collaboration. Having to compromise between different opinions, quickly gather and analyse information is one aspect of competitive success. Information in such an environment can be impossible or unavailable to the level of overburdening, therefore effective communication skills are indispensable

On multi handed boats, collaboration and communication is clearer to identify although not easier to develop. Crewed boats are an excellent laboratory in which to exercise and develop emotional intelligence and learn how to communicate in the right way. The division of roles, on the various sides of a path, determines the rules of the relationship between the crew members and the limits of action of each. First of all, the sharing of objectives among teammates and the definition of the priorities of each one represent the basis on which to work and cooperate to achieve them. Experiencing failures and victories together, analysing what led to one or the other, will be a reason for personal and crew growth. The coach is often the moderator of this growth process and is the one who guides the relational processes of the crew, a sort of *deus ex machina*

### *Flexibility*

In sailing, the only thing constant is the change itself. To succeed, every sailor must constantly change something, be it with themselves, their boat, or their ways of doing things. As conditions and competition evolve, plans and formerly known good strategies frequently change to become tactics.

Starting from the sailboat, it has multiple fixed or mobile adjustments that can be changed by the sailor to increase the performance of the boat itself.

Beginners, no matter the age or physical needs, are forced by the sport to face a whole new reality. Not even the floor is what they are used to. They have to adjust their way of thinking, the way they move, what details to see and pay attention to, what they feel, and so on. It becomes a new world outside and inside every person and every sailor, when they face nature, feels the need by themselves of adaptation to new situations and sensations.

In a more advanced stage, the crew must be able not only to adapt themselves to marine conditions but also to adapt the boat, in order to make it more performing and manoeuvrable.

In multi-crew boats, sailors are also inclined to adapt to the timing and modalities of their mates.

The coach has the task of keeping the attention on changes in meteorological conditions and on the variability of exercises to get the sailors out of their comfort zone.

## *Leadership*

In Italian, the verb used to indicate the action of sailing on a sailboat is "condurre" (to lead), from the Latin "conducere" which means "to accompany, carry, guide people, animals or things". Sailing alone or with a crew therefore implies taking on the responsibility of "driving" the vehicle into the sea pushed by the wind on the sails. From a very young age this condition is very stimulating and formative, often children who start practising the sport of sailing find themselves steering a vehicle for the first time, the older ones with more experience during the regatta have to extricate themselves by manoeuvring in confined spaces a boat that expresses its movement through the action of external forces exploited through the equipment of the boat itself. All this implies a series of filters and cause-and-effect levels that require both a cognitive effort in understanding what is being done and the ability to act in the correct way to ensure that the boat does what the crew wants.

When the boat is steered by a crew, collaboration and coordination dictated by the roles of the people on board is also necessary. There is a constant need to mediate between different ideas and opinions of its crew. That is why in many cases, leadership is entrusted to the person with more experience or who has the task of managing the choices on the path to follow or the tactics to be adopted. This role consists mostly in gaining necessary information efficiently and quickly from each member to make a decision of the best course of action which may not be based on a democratic decision making process.

Whether it is a regatta or a pleasure sailing with friends, leadership is evaluated and confirmed by the ability of the person invested in the role to know how to steer the boat by making choices at the right time and involving all the crew in the teamwork.

# Part 2.

## **Coach role in skills development**

Coaches have a thundering role in the development of these skills in every stage of the training. That is why having in consideration every sailor and coach is different, in this section of the manual, we will separate each skill into three stages that represent a normal training day: briefing, on the water and debriefing. Being the briefing the moment before going to the water (boat rigging, preparation, talking before launching the boats), on the water meaning the sailing itself (one on one with the boat) and debriefing as the after sailing various situations (unrigging the boat, cleaning, talk with the team).





## Critical thinking

### *Briefing*

From the beginning of the day, every sailor needs to feel comfortable in the club, with the teammates, their parents and the coach. The atmosphere you work in and the climate you create at home and at the sailing club is important.

All of us will arrive at the club with previous feelings, emotions and thoughts. It is up to the coach to help the sailors to start leaving all of that behind and start to have fun and to be focused within the sport. Playing games, cleaning and rigging the boat are some examples.

Once the sailors are in the sailing mindset, they are ready for a talk. As coaches, we have to guide them to establish their daily goals (recreational or competitive), analyse the meteorological and geographical conditions, the boats, the other sailors, and any other feature that we, as more experienced sailors, consider. Basically, here is where the situational consciousness starts. To hear and validate the sailors input is one of the most difficult things to do as a coach because to help others to develop critical thinking, we need to develop it ourselves first.

Questions like: What did you do last sailing day that you would like to do differently today? What do you want to achieve today? Is the wind stable or oscillating?, will force the sailors to start visualising and planning ahead their day. With practice, they will become more self-aware and their goals will be more assertive.

### *On the water*

All the activities, especially in the initial stage, have to be broken down into small stages where you see small, small victories. Small stages, small steps and small victories and then you can see that you are succeeding, you are getting there. This is a great way of stimulating the will to go further.

Throughout games, the coach can generate a suitable amount of pressure if the conditions of the day allow it, so that the sailors feel the need to anticipate the problems and to solve them fast and in the right way.

Many times it happens that the sailors put gigantic amounts of pressure on themselves. Mostly on competitive sailing. The development of critical thinking in these cases is through determination shown by the coach. Nothing stabilises a sailor more than knowing his coach is a critical thinker. So the sailor relies on the skills of the coach, stops pressuring himself as much and is ready to put his mind down to the water.

The same as in the given example of pressure, happens the same with fear, excitement, anger, happiness and all kinds of emotions developed in the water, the club or at home. It is substantial that sailors remain connected to "here and now", to the present. In more advanced stages, sailors learn how to use these emotions to sail better but with beginners or children it is advisable to not let these emotions interfere when they are getting out of their comfort zone.

The coach has the constant responsibility to guide the sailors to self awareness for them to be able to set up their goals without underestimating themselves but also without overestimating themselves.

So critical thinking starts with the coach and how he or she handles the daily situations.

## *Debriefing*

When coming back to port, there are more variables to handle as a coach. In the case of children it is the parents who are present because they are curious to see if the child can manage by himself, we coaches can sum up the training by calling for a briefing first of the sailors and then of the parents. We can simply give instructions for parents to follow at home after training. Take pride, enjoy it together, it will be more fun for next time. The child will want to have the joy of this cool conversation with the parents at home.

When talking to the sailors, the coach has to guide them to analyse as many situations of the day as the sailors can. It will not be the same amount of circumstances a beginner can remember and go through, as what a high performance sailor can. Although the quality of both analyses can be as good.

To help the sailor to develop critical thinking in this session, it is imperative as a coach to listen and validate the sailors approach and thoughts. When they sum up the day in their minds, they will do it only from their perspective. The push a coach gives in those scenarios is for them to look into the big picture. No matter if it was a training or a regatta, questions like: How was your decision influenced by others? Or, what were the consequences to you and your teammates after you did that? Will definitely trigger their situational consciousness and big thinking picture.

## **Creativity**

Nothing remains the same and sailing is not the exception to that. Neither are the ways of coaching, training and winning. It's crucial that we as coaches, can constantly adapt to the updates the sport brings and also create our own new ways of coaching. Concepts change and so does the sport and how we all behave to get out the best for us.

### ***Briefing***

There are not two sailors that are the same so when starting the day, we as coaches have a lot of ways to catch their attention such as games, exercises, drawing on a board, talking, joking, and so on. Of course we need to adapt all these resources to each sailor by having in consideration their edge, knowledge, if they have special needs and their background.

To boost the creativity we as coaches need to allow the sailors to have their own Physical and mental space. So they will feel the need to do something not to remain the same. That is the critical moment of developing creativity. The coach can push for example the kids if they are playing and one of them is sitting on a side or if we are talking about people with special necessities, and insecurities come to the table, we can guide them on how to start a task. But it is crucial that we don't give the sailors all the answers on how to do things. We need to be patient and respect the time they need to find their own way to do things.

Often, at the beginning of the day, when rigging, repairing or adapting the boat for the conditions of the day, tools or some ropes or blocks are missing. Regardless of the amount of resources we count with, we need to make the sailors take part in the process of solving the problem. I always say to my sailors when there is something they never did before "The first time, I do it for you and you watch. Second time, we do it together and third time you do it by yourself" What normally happens is that when they are in the third stage, they find themselves with enough confidence to feel that the coach is looking after them but still having to figure out how to solve the issue they have in front of them.

When we start the day pushing the sailors to be creative in a field that they already know such as the land, it makes it easier for them to bring it to the water. It is like stretching before doing exercise.

### ***On the water***

Here, sailors have to manage the boat in the waves, shifts, among other boats, follow the rules and all of that, without stopping having fun. How they handle these variables is particularly linked to the adaptability they develop with the experience of sailing and resolving the countless unforeseen events or situations that can occur in different circumstances.

Problems and new situations are never missed on the water. But the most common example of how a coach can help sailors to develop creativity on the water is by letting them decide how to figure out their own issues. Interfering only when it comes to safety, rules in general and specific training.

Most visible circumstance is before a regatta when the sailor feels all the pressure to make things right. They come to the RIB and ask for help from the coach to know what to do in the next race. This precise moment is when the coach should remain calm and instead of giving

the sailor an already made plan, he can show to the sailor different aspects of the day. Where is the wind coming from, where is the current going, how many degrees are the shifts taking, how is the race score, if there are differences between one race and the next one. There are multiple aspects a coach can show to the sailor but which of them the coach decides to bring to the table according to each sailor's necessities, is another example of creativity on the water. Although a small debate with the coach is a very useful tool for the sailor, what strategy the sailor builds after it, should be only his responsibility. Later, when the race starts, that plan will change due to unpredictable factors. Strategy turns into tactics, fast decisions have to be made by the sailor. For him to be creative on how to make those choices according to the rules and others, he needs to be aware of what the initial plan was. He needs to have that perspective to develop the skill for a lifetime.

Is crucial that the coach is not only after positions when it comes to racing. The human factor of the sport should not be forgotten because of a championship. If we always tell them our input without letting them decide on their own, we can have good results after a race but we will never have a real champion.

### ***Debriefing***

After the session on the water, be it training or a championship, sailors and coaches are tired. They all want to unrig fast and get a shower or if they are kids, they will just want to finish fast to keep playing. In any of the cases, there is a need for efficiency and that need is what pushes the sailors to be creative once more.

They will find all the ways possible to make it happen. Kids normally compete on who unrigs faster and adults find easier ways to unrig. Coaches normally don't interfere during this process.

Once the sailors finish with all their duties and are more relaxed, a small talk starts. Here the coach has the freedom to push all he wants the sailors to be more and more creative by encouraging them to always find different ways of using the rules, solving problems, help others, and even to find other ways of having fun. A very useful activity to make during debriefing is to let one of the sailors tell the others about a situation he had on the water that he thinks he could have resolved better. So the team can compete on who finds the most creative way of solving that issue no matter if it was during a race, training or before going on the water.

Another essential component in the process of developing this skill is boredom. Although it applies for all ages, it is most commonly seen in kids. When we have free time and no pressure to spend it in a certain way, we get bored and we find something to do that will bring us joy. During this process there is a huge amount of creativity involved and it is one of the critical points of the development of the skill. If the coach creates an environment for sailors in which the sailors are completely free of duties, other non-sailor people, and some rules of behaviour and safety, sailors will develop creativity a lot faster.

Although it sounds contradictory, we need to invest big amounts of time in creativity to develop faster in each sailor.

## Collaboration & Communication

### *Briefing*

We all communicate with others and collaborate when there is a will of achieving the same goal. So it doesn't matter if we are talking about single or multi handed boats when it comes to this skill.

On shore, the team of sailors has a list of duties to fulfil in order to be able to go to the water. Be it rigging the boat, changing clothes, and so on.

To develop communication and collaboration between the sailors the coach must introduce the concept of "Team" and through rules, force them to work as a team. As an example of these rules, we can think that if there is a trailer with boats to unload, sailors have to bring all the boats down together. Another example could be that no sailor can launch the boat before all of the others are ready to launch as well.

When the coach creates this environment and lets the sailors self-organise, the team will see clearly that there is a mutual goal to achieve but none of them can do it without others. Now, they will need to communicate to find the best way to collaborate in order to achieve what they want.

Depending on the age and necessities of every sailor, the coach will adapt the way to communicate and collaborate with them as well. If we have children trying to unload a 4mts tall trailer, we can't expect them to do it without help. We just need to find the right moment to introduce that help so that we don't break the self-organisation of the team.

### *On the water*

When it comes to multi handed boats, there is a whole part of the sport that the coach is not part of. Crews create their own world on the boat throughout communication and collaboration. It is a stage in which working together in a small space with a large workload can only be carried out efficiently with good collaboration skills. Having to compromise between different opinions, quickly gather and analyse information is one aspect of competitive success.

Information in such an environment can be impossible or unavailable to the level of overburdening, therefore effective communication skills are indispensable.

Although the coach can not be in the boat with the sailors, he can observe and with the right amount of experience and awareness, he can distinguish moments of missed communications between the crew. Emotions and empathy between the sailors is a key component of collaboration and the coach can interfere in the right moment to moderate this.

In all cases, to improve, sailors feel the need to exercise and develop emotional intelligence and learn how to communicate in the right way. The division of roles, on the various sides of a path, determines the rules of the relationship between the crew members and the limits of action of each. First of all, the sharing of objectives among teammates and the definition of the priorities of each one represent the basis on which to work and cooperate to achieve them. Experiencing failures and victories together, analysing what led to one or the other, will be a reason for personal and crew growth. The coach is often the moderator of this growth process and is the one who guides the relational processes of the crew.

## *Debriefing*

Either for analysing what happened on the water, playing games, or resting after a hard day, sailors have to do it as a team and the coach can't let them go home without at least recognising something good about their teammates.

Depending on the amount of tiredness, it's normal to care less about our duties and other people but if we want the team to succeed, we need to control this very closely. The relationship between the members of the team is vital and the coach must emphasise on this point.

When we discuss the water session, all kinds of misunderstandings between the crew and/or the team come to the table. Sometimes, they even start to fight because they feel the other members of the crew didn't understand or listen to what they were saying or doing. Here is when the coach interferes as a mediator of the issues to help them to communicate and empathise between them. The more experienced the sailors are, the more they feel they are in their comfort zone and the more calm they are to communicate in a healthy way. We can not expect that two teenagers that just met and go together sailing on a rough day, will behave between each other in the same way as a crew that knows each other for 3 years.

In order for the coach to be a good guide in the development of communication and collaboration skills, he has to be a good communicator himself. To moderate the frequency and volume level of the voice, can transmit and show to the sailors emotions that the words themselves can't.

## Flexibility

### *Briefing*

Every coach arrives to the club with a certain plan of training for the day based on our goals and the forecast but when we start to interact with the sailors, we find that maybe that day they are not in a good mood, they have physical pain or any other reason they come up with that don't allow us to continue with the plan. So we have to adapt our plan to the current situation.

In the same way, sailors have to be flexible enough to overcome their limitations of the day to get the best out of the training.

Coach and sailors now together create a new plan of training for the day by listening to each other with humbleness and acceptance knowing that any plan will probably need to be changed when they are on the water.

In sailing, the only thing constant is the change itself. That's why the coach has to highlight that changing a plan and making different kinds of decisions is one of the most important skills in training or in a race. We all make mistakes in every aspect of our lives but the sooner we accept it, the faster we can change it. The coach has to teach the sailors to not let mistakes become disasters.

Inshore, there are a lot of factors sailors have to adapt to. Notifications before a race, equipment missing, mood and reactions of the teammates are few examples but sailors will not have any sort of issue by doing so if and only if they see their coach adapt to all changes with naturality. If they see the coach has a problem, they will identify a certain situation with a problem. In the same way, if the coach flows with the constant altercations and keeps going on, the sailors will not identify the situation as limiting. This statement is very useful for all types of sailors but it's crucial when working in parasailing.

### *On the water*

An old sailor once said that the best sailor is the one who can be one with the boat, whose toes end in every edge of the hull and their head in the top of the sail. Given the fact that the boat is an inanimate object, the only way to feel the boat is to fully adapt to it and to the nature that surrounds it. Only by including the sensorial learning, can we become great sailors. Given the fact that this perspective is not quite a traditional one, coaches need to explain and show the sailor on the water the difference of, for example, moving the body to overcome a wave by feeling the movement of the water and doing the same just by looking at it.

The sailor has not only to adjust to the boat, wind and waves but also to the other sailors and to the coach. Those are all uncontrollable factors for any person. On the water as in any situation in life we have circumstances that we can control and some that we can not. We as coaches need to show to the sailors while sailing, that when they face a new situation that they can not control, the only thing left to do is to adapt to it and use it in our favour.

From the coach's perspective, it is sometimes very hard to see that the sailors are about to make a big mistake and we always try to avoid that. If we prevent the sailors from making such errors, we will get a short term solution, but if we want our sailors to succeed in the sport and develop flexibility, we need to let them make every mistake they need. The more errors they

make, the easier it will be for them to recognize those mistakes, accept them and not turn them into failure.

When it comes to races, tactics are all about fast making decisions due to unexpected events. The sailor who wins is not the one who didn't make any mistakes, is the one who did less and used them in his favour. To push sailors to make errors and have to recover fast, is a great strategy as a coach to oblige them to adjust and adapt to new circumstances because later, as conditions and competition evolve, plans and formerly known good strategies frequently need to be adapted.

### *Debriefing*

When back inshore and discussing what happened during the water session, we need to guide sailors towards self awareness of the quantity and quality of mental flexibility they had during training or racing because most of the time it will be unnoticed during sailing. It will be seen and felt by the sailors as improvisation. It is the responsibility of the coach to dig into that perception and clarify it for the sailor.

With practice, sailors will start to notice it themselves and develop it more and more with less help.

Some key moments can be discussed by the team through questions the coach makes. For example, What was your original plan? How did you deviate from it? How long did it take you to switch up your plan? Could you have foreseen all the different options you had in these 30 seconds? How did the crew take your idea?

The only intention of these questions should be to create self awareness and situational consciousness in between the sailor. If the coach or any member of the team judges the answers to the questions or decisions taken on the water, the opposite effect will appear. The sailor will start to overthink every decision before making it and instead of adapting to every situation, he will get blocked when facing new events.

We have to remember that every day sailors are getting outside of their comfort zone to learn how to sail better and that is stressful enough to have to deal on top of that, with non constructive criticism.



## Leadership

### *Briefing*

The same way as with the other skills, leadership is developed from the early stages of each person in the sport. Rigging a multi handed boat for the first time is a perfect example of leadership inshore. Tasks of the team are not yet defined but everyone wants to have the boat in perfect conditions before training. Usually, one of the team members starts to say what they need to do and the rest of the crew just follows the orders.

There will always be some member of the team with some skills more developed than the others but to keep a balanced team that goes with all members towards success, it is very important that the coach compose a proportional development of the skills in every sailor. So coming back to the last example, an intervention of the coach to change roles in the crew, is a good option.

No matter the age or physical characteristics of the sailors, the primary goal is always to have fun but most of the time, we take it for granted. In between the team of sailors, they all want to have fun but often, one by one stops doing things to achieve this goal. The leader of the teams shows up by being the last one who forgets about it.

Especially in kids it's easier to distinguish this when they play before launching and when they are rigging the boat. Far away from being something out of place, it is a very useful detail to observe for the coach. This is one of the basis to understand the group's dynamic and to reinforce the leadership skill in the sailors who need it more.

On the other hand, when we realise that it is going to be a day with difficult meteorological conditions, we know the training will require an extra amount of responsibility. To keep the training in a safe environment, coaches and sailors need to be able to communicate but because of the wind many times it's not an easy task. An efficient way to avoid misunderstandings is to choose a team leader before launching so that if sailors are not sure about what to do and they can not reach the coach, they still have an accessible pair to look at and follow.

### *On the water*

Without making a distinction between single or crew sailing, every sailor is alone at some moment because all of them have to make choices at some point when sailing. In that moment they are all equally facing themselves inside their own minds.

Looking at this from the coaching perspective, it takes a lot of detailed orientation observation to differentiate those moments in others but with practice, it becomes natural. To reinforce the development of leadership in the sailors, it's key that the coach supports the sailors in these specific moments.

If we have a beginner who is facing fear and we as coaches see he is trying to overcome it, by looking at him closely, we will identify when he gets to his inflection moment of doing the tasks despite the fear. With one word of the coach in that specific moment, sailors tend to get enough confidence to do what they had to do although they are afraid. After overcoming that situation, the feeling of joy and self-confidence fills up the sailor and he alone starts to spread it to the group. Without the sailor even noticing it, he is becoming a leader.

To be aware of the group's dynamic and constantly change it, is what will push the team of sailors to share and exchange roles between themselves.

Although leadership is often entrusted to the one with more experience, all sailors need to develop the skill. In order to help them, the coach can switch the amount of responsibility he gives to each member of the team so that the leader can be sometimes the one with more experience and sometimes the one with more responsibility.

### *Debriefing*

To load up a trailer, to gather all the team for a talk with the coach or simply to start playing after sailing is the daily basis of any sailing day but no coach should run after the sailor to force to do so. Instead, if it is a well consolidated team, one or some sailors will call the rest of them to attend to the talk with the coach because they already know that for them to succeed, they need to analyse the day and in order to do so, they need to be all the team together to start debating what happened during the day with the coach.

This is a perfect example of how leadership grows among the team. One identifies the need in himself and/or in the group, finds the way to solve it and brings all the teammates together to fulfil a goal.

Of course, this is simple in words but in reality is very challenging to get to this balance. A team will self organise and self lead itself only if the coach is strong enough to put behavioural boundaries on how to communicate with sailors and on how they communicate between themselves.

A non balanced team in terms of positive leadership, will fall into known issues such as bullying, discrimination or exclusion of some of the members of the team. It is duty of the coach to not tolerate negative ways of leadership.



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