



# **IDBF Para Athletes Commission**

Returning to Dragon Boating in a  
Coronavirus Environment

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# Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has been unprecedented and has had a significant impact on life in most of the world. In many countries, the sport of dragon boating has been put on hold. Although at the time of publication of this guide, there were signs that the effects of the virus were beginning to be brought under control in some places, it is generally the case that the sport as we all understand it to be is not really happening.

This guide is intended to help clubs with Paradrakon members to think about issues relating to Covid-19 and how a safe return to dragon boating can be planned. However, the IDBF Para Athletes Commission recognises that Paradrakons are often a part of club, and not just the only members of a club. Accordingly, there will be considerations affecting Paradrakons that would also affect any paddler. But there are also considerations that will likely only affect Paradrakons and these are highlighted thus in the guide for easy reference.

Although the term 'Covid-19' is used throughout this guide, the guide could nevertheless be applied to future pandemics caused by a similar coronavirus.

Underpinning this guide are:

- the harsh realities of Covid-19 (it is contagious and can be lethal); and
- the fundamental principle that should apply to everything we do: **safety must always override other considerations** (and in the context of Covid-19, the maintenance of public health must be a non-negotiable priority).

Finally, the nature of Covid-19 and the varying national and local responses to it mean that a 'one size fits all' approach cannot be developed. Instead, this guide acknowledges the overriding obligation to adhere to local restrictions etc while providing 'food for thought' in how you do so.

# Assumptions

For the purposes of this guide, a 'coronavirus environment' is taken to be a situation in a location (be that global, continental, national or just local) where a coronavirus of the Covid-19 type is known to be present and:

- 'herd immunity' is not present and/or effective vaccination is not available; and
- testing of people for the virus (with almost instant reliable results) is not readily available at little or no cost

In other words, without the above being in place, the presence of Covid-19 (or similar) presents a risk to public health.

## Remember ....

.... **dragon boating is not essential to life!**

We know that most paddlers won't agree with this simple statement, but we must accept the inherent truth of it. Covid-19 can kill and trying to save an infected person's life can itself be risky to the medical personnel that might need to be involved, and family members and friends could themselves become at risk; dealing with a person infected with Covid-19 can also consume significant resources. We may all want to dragon boat, but we really don't need to dragon boat.

Therefore, when considering a return to dragon boating, be sure you understand the risks, have plans to manage and mitigate those risks, and ways of evaluating the effectiveness of your approach.

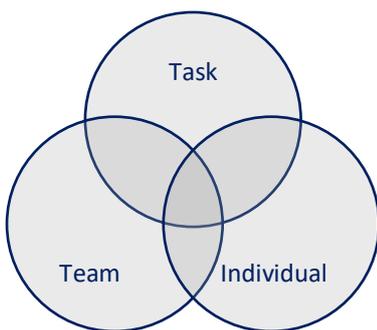
If doubts arise, stop the activity immediately and think through how to proceed.

## Our recommended approach

The IDBF Para Athletes Commission recommends an approach based on:

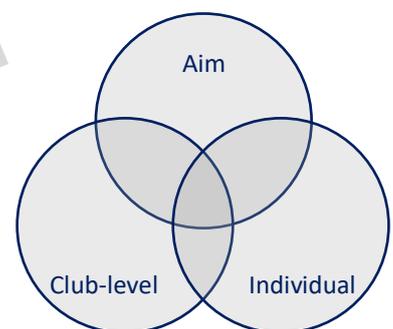
- consideration of factors relating to:
  - your aim (a return to dragon boating);
  - your club; and
  - the individual paddlers and other personnel in the club;and
- clear separation of 'things you must do' and 'things you could do'

The approach draws from John Adair's Action-Centred Leadership Model<sup>1</sup>. John Adair's model is one of the most widely recognised leadership models and its appeal lies in its inherent simplicity, as depicted in his 'three circles' which he sees as mutually dependent:



The model encourages us to consider three elements ('circles') that contribute to overall success. By getting the balance between them right, we will get results, build morale, and develop/grow both teams and individuals.

We've adapted his model (as he recommends users do) to suit the specific needs of Paradrasons (depicted here):



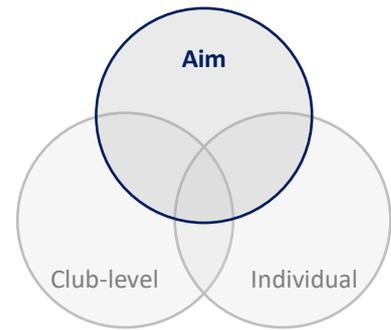
The considerations relating to each of the circles are set out in the following pages.

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to: <https://www.businessballs.com/leadership-models/action-centred-leadership-john-adair/>

## Considerations - the aim

The aim is for Paradrasons to return to dragon boating. The club may wish to modify this overall aim to say, for example, whether this is for:

- purely social paddling; or
- fitness; or
- competition.



But whatever the aim is, it will shape considerations at the club and individual level.

If your club does not have only Paradrason members, then the aim should also reflect whether the Paradrasons would train just with each other, or with other (unimpaired) club members.



### Things you must do:

1. Conform to any government-imposed restrictions in your area
2. Conform to any restrictions placed on you by the owners of the site and of the body of water where you train.
3. Ensure your insurance cover is appropriate for your proposed aim and covers all your proposed activities.

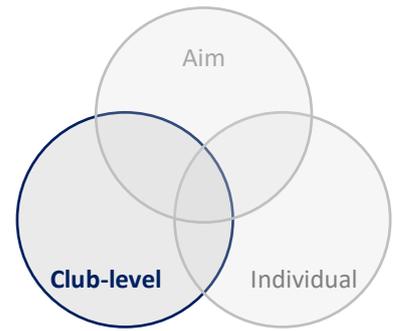
### Things you could do:

- Develop a plan outlining the milestones en-route to achievement of your aim.
- Work out how you will monitor progress, and then do so!
- Adjust your milestones etc as necessary

## Considerations – club-level

Having determined the aim, the next focus should be consideration of what needs to happen at club level to help achieve the aim.

There are many 'check lists' that have been developed by sports bodies around the world to deal with Covid-19 that you can draw from. Some are extremely detailed but probably reflect strong risk-aversion. Others might really be too 'high level' to be useful guides at club level.



### Things you must do:

1. Conform to any government-imposed requirements in your area (example: maintenance of a physical distance between people; cap on numbers of people allowed to participate)
2. Conform to any requirements of the owners of the site and of the body of water where you train.
3. Seriously consider whether proposed Paradrage participation can be made acceptably safe
4. Complete, and document, a risk assessment

### Things you could do:

- Liaise with other clubs and your national federation to try to develop 'good practice'.
- Appoint a club 'Covid-19 officer' to coordinate coronavirus-related matters
- Produce and communicate a Safety Plan
- Lower your paddlers' expectations!
- Introduce temperature screening for all on arrival
- Impose a **turn up – train – go away** approach to training

Here are some general things we believe it is important the club's management team considers (before focussing specifically on Paradrakon additional needs):

- Introduce a declaration and/or waiver form for all participants
- Make clear that attendance will only be allowed from people meeting specified health criteria
- Imposing an '**turn up – train - go away**' approach:
  - **turn up** - participants should arrive as ready to train as they can be (with minimal clothing changes needed at the club).
  - **train** – where 'train' means warm up, paddle, warm down. The aim here is to focus solely on on-water training and to minimise all other non-essential training activities that can be done in other ways (for example off-water training on matters such as administration, race rules, tactics could be done in newsletters or by video conference).
  - **go away** – help clean up, then depart as soon as possible afterwards (no social gatherings!)
- The standards of personal behaviour that will be expected
- How do you deal with a person wanting to paddle but whose condition suggests they are in a category that is at increased risk (eg compromised immune systems, significant medical conditions, age etc)? Is this an individual responsibility or a club-level one?
- How do you deal with a person who appears symptomatic?
- How to balance legitimate restrictions (for example, on numbers of people allowed to participate) with the need to achieve the aim. This will impact a range of things; some examples:
  - car parking;
  - access to changing/showering facilities;
  - warm-ups;
  - moving the boat(s) to and from storage (without a trolley or similar, you may not have enough people!);
  - boat layouts (reduced numbers could affect stability, and will affect the ability to manoeuvre the boat in adverse weather conditions); and

- safety generally
- Whether to mandate use of own paddles and buoyancy aids (or, for those who don't have their own, arrange a long-term loan from club resources)
- Provision (and cleaning) of toilets
- Communicate agreed protocols with signs in appropriate places at the club
- Cleaning (sanitising) of boats and other equipment (probably before use and maybe after too?)
- Whether facemasks and/or gloves (if not mandated by others) should be mandated by the club (we consider they should be worn by those carrying out cleaning duties, but consideration does need to be given to what is required during an actual training activity)
- Provision of hand sanitiser and PPE
- Provision of suitable containers for used PPE
- Marking out of personal 'areas' for warm-ups and warm-downs
- Banning of group/team 'huddles'
- First aid cover – equipment (inc PPE), first aiders willing to act as such, and extra training for those first aiders?
- Safety cover – if a safety boat is used, can any distancing requirements be met by the crew?
- Coaching – is this better done from an accompanying boat?
- Try to minimise use of non-essential equipment (examples: are a drum and drummer's seat really necessary for training; and do you really need that speaker system?)
- Maintenance and retention of attendance records
- Recording of boat layouts (as an aid to contact tracing should a paddler subsequently test positive for Covid-19 or appear symptomatic)
- Keeping members fully and regularly informed of what is happening and why things need to be the way they are

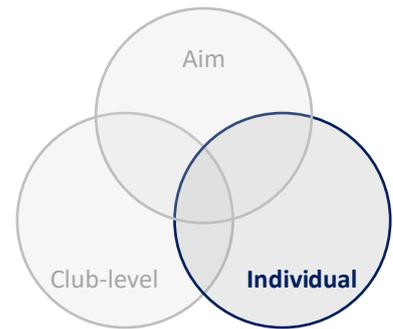
The above is not exhaustive but intended to generate proper discussion.

Next, some considerations specifically related to Paradrakon participants:

- Can crew safety be maintained when Paradrakons are involved? Do you need to mandate a certain number of unimpaired paddlers (who are also good swimmers) to be in the boat to be able to provide immediate assistance in the event of a capsize?
- Who fits any adaptations to the boat that facilitate a physically impaired person paddling? How are any such adaptations kept 'clean'?
- How do you deal with someone with intellectual impairments who may not fully comprehend the situation?
- How are those needing assistance entering and/or leaving the boat given the assistance? If someone from the same social 'bubble' is present, they could assist. If allowed, use of appropriate PPE by the helper could reduce the risk materially. But, if distancing requirements prohibit 'strangers' holding onto or even touching someone else (even if one or both are wearing PPE), that person cannot be allowed to paddle. Note: this may not just affect the physically or neurologically impaired, but also the visually impaired.
- How do you provide for someone suffering from, say, PTSD, who has an 'episode'? Do you have a suitable, safe, quiet space they can be taken to? What happens if the episode occurs during a paddling activity – who looks after the paddler and how?
- How do you provide necessary extra safety cover? Some physically impaired paddlers would not be able to swim ashore following a capsize and the likely limited numbers of other paddlers reduces the boat's crew from effecting their own rescue.
- Are buoyancy aids to be mandated?
- How to deal with accompanying (but non-paddling) carers whose presence may cause an imposed 'maximum allowable number' to be exceeded?

## Considerations – individuals

Finally, you need to think through issues relating to individual paddlers.



### Things you must do:

1. Make sure every person understands the risks and feels under no pressure to return to paddling
2. Make sure every person knows when they must not turn up (because they are symptomatic or someone in their social bubble is)
3. Empower people to make the right decisions

### Things you could do:

- Ease people back into dragon boating through video conferencing, and single craft paddling (if safe to do so)
- Recognise and praise individuals for actions that are for the benefit of all
- Provide more one-on-one support between sessions

Some considerations:

- Insist on people doing a self-assessment before every session – if in doubt, encourage them not to turn up
- Encourage honesty in the completion of any declaration / waiver form
- Empower the Paradrragon who needs assistance to think through how that assistance might best be provided and to talk it through with the club
- If someone does train, and feels the need to cough or sneeze, make sure they know to do so down into the boat or into their own clothing
- Where the club does not mandate wearing of facemasks or gloves, respect those who choose to do so
- Do not allow handshakes, high fives or other similar forms of celebratory behaviour

- Make sure each person understands clearly their role in the training session

## Finally ...

Covid-19 has changed things, in some cases probably for the foreseeable future. Sports like dragon boating are particularly affected because of the close proximity in which significant numbers of people carry out arduous physical activity.

Our valued Paradrakon community deserves all the support we can give them to return to paddling but some of the impairments that Paradrakons have bring challenges they may not always be easily overcome.

This guide sets out to help clubs with Paradrakon members but it cannot do so unless in the context of other considerations. Necessarily therefore, the guide tries to take a holistic view and introduces discussion points that are just as valid for clubs with only fully unimpaired paddlers as they are for clubs that cater solely for Paradrakons.

Also, the guide does not set out to be, nor can it be, authoritative about Covid-19 symptoms, diagnosis, transmission vectors, infection-prevention, or treatment. At the date of publication, the world is probably only just beginning to gain a proper understanding of the various issues that relate to the virus, and this knowledge is constantly evolving. Therefore, we can only advise that you read the guide alongside medical and governmental advice.

Don't be afraid to return to training but:

- be aware of the risks - do a proper risk assessment;
- think carefully about things;
- plan, and then plan some more;
- lower expectations – it will take time before club, national or world records are again under threat;
- make sure everyone feels valued by your club and their interests looked after, regardless of their personal health; and
- **stay safe, stay healthy!**

## Questions? Comments?

If you have any questions about, or comments on, the contents of this guide, please get in touch with the IDBF Para Athletes Commission by email:

[chair-para@dragonboat.sport](mailto:chair-para@dragonboat.sport)