

Some Features, Technical Info and Paddling Tips for the

Shaman



Technical play-boating, whitewater freestyle, upstream attainments, playing rapids in a slalom-like manner; all ways of describing some excellent exercises for boaters to develop or challenge their skills. It can also be fun just reading the water and feeling how it affects the boat's motion.

The SHAMAN responds very well when paddled naturally, or in a conventional style. The hull's basic simplicity yields a user friendly play-boat that lets you focus on enjoying the river. Becoming familiar with its handling characteristics should be quick and pleasant.

A blend of complimentary design features distinguish the SHAMAN from other boats in its class. Gradually integrating these features and tips into your paddling will allow you to experience a higher performance level. Remember, experimenting and discovery are part of the joy of paddling.

Dynamic trim sensitivity allows the paddler to actively change the waterline footprint. Applying deliberate but subtle stern weight shifts or knee pressure to engage selected segments of the hull will change water flow characteristics and therefore the boat's reaction to currents and paddle strokes. The overall performance range is broader because of the asymmetrical rocker and waterline. Generally speaking, weight focus is on the bow section for forward speed, the stern section for spinning and maximum maneuverability.

The slender shape is comfortable to paddle and is a contributing factor to the SHAMAN's superb speed and glide. Normal paddle extension and posture during the forward stroke places the traveling emphasis on the sleek bow. A defined entry at the waterline reduces frontal resistance and enhances directional stability by directing the water flow. Outstanding bow control can be achieved by combining knee pressure and appropriate stroke placement for the desired turning effect. Snappier eddy turns are possible when crossing mellow eddy lines by putting pressure on the outside knee and catching the bow chine. This may take some practice to get used to but can be done smoothly because of the soft chines and flared sides. The crisper the eddy line, the more dynamic the turn gets. Relative hull speed also affects the dynamics. Start mild and work up. It may soon become part of your paddling style. Classic inside leans remain the appropriate way to cross the more invigorating eddy lines. Outside leans can also initiate carved turns or spins. Edging is usually, but not always, complimented with a control stroke or turning stroke in the bow area. Hull speed must be sufficient with neutral resistance on both sides of the bow to be the most effective when initiating a directional change in this manner. This can be done with finesse and eliminate some turning strokes, but a stern correction stroke will likely be needed if too much pressure is allowed to build up on the opposing side. Using knee pressure can also help make minor adjustments in ferry angles by catching or releasing current flow on the bow.

Develop the habit of leaning back to achieve the best turning characteristics. That is the biggest difference in paddling the SHAMAN. Major directional changes like spinning are executed with some stern lean to release the bow. The spin zone is actually behind the center of the boat so the paddler's torso becomes the pivot point. Turning strokes are often placed in the bow section and modified as needed, but it is important to shift upper body weight toward the stern for maximum maneuverability. The sensation is vaguely like a stern pivot with the bow being controlled in a sweeping motion. A paddler's weight is naturally shifted behind center due to torso rotation during stern correction strokes or major turning strokes. More deliberate stern leans may be used for aggressive turns. Surfing steeper waves or lifting the bow over a wave crest or hydraulic are other examples. Tweaking the bow to the side of a wave crest or blocking waves are good tactics for keeping dry. It is usually counter-productive to lean forward to spin the boat in moving currents, except sometimes when utilizing current differentials. Dropping the bow or stern on the edge of an eddy, or into the corner of a hydraulic, or the face of a wave can also initiate a spin. Reverse strokes slow the boat in fast current so you can set up a spin or a back-ferry for sideslipping obstacles. Additional volume in the stern actually enhances overall stability in bigger water. Stern strokes are used more often in these conditions too. Leans are adjusted as needed throughout play-boating situations. Typically they are subtle or completely natural. Control strokes executed in the bow area make adjustments in the boat's direction while providing some forward momentum. Stern strokes are stronger and more effective when maximum correction is needed. Think bow control, stern correction.

A shallow arch bottom, soft primary chines and flared sides from bow to stern permit you to roll the boat up to block waves with confidence. The feel is consistent and predictable. The flare also deflects chop. The weight bearing knee is comfortably positioned so the center of gravity can be concentrated over the lowest part of the hull when leaned up. The boat firms up at the shoulder giving a steady reference point and optimum overall final stability when combined with a sufficient J-lean. The SHAMAN is smooth and forgiving in squirrely water or when side surfing, working diagonal hydraulics during upstream attainments and so on. These characteristics minimize bracing so the paddler can focus on active and productive strokes.

Correct positioning of the saddle and knee cups is recommended to best take advantage of these design features. Be sure to refer to the following recommendations if outfitting the SHAMAN yourself:

- * For optimum final stability, your knees should be located out against the chines of the canoe, not on the flatter bottom of the boat's hull. This allows the weight bearing knee to be comfortably positioned so your center of gravity can be concentrated over the lowest part of the hull (in the chine) when leaned up.
- * Hemlock SHAMAN (composite) - The saddle should be located so your spine is 11" behind the center of the canoe.
- * ABS SHAMAN 12 (not in production) - The saddle should be located so your spine is 10 1/2" behind the center of the canoe.

The placement and angle of your canoe is determined by a relationship of the forces being applied to the hull. The degree and direction of those forces are variable. Sense where those forces are being applied in which portion of the hull and in what combination or for how much time. Controlling the movement of a canoe on the water is basically a function of balancing the forces of water or wind which act on the hull by using selective forces applied through the appropriate paddle strokes.

Timing and placement of paddle strokes are related to efficiency. Selectively combining the appropriate control signals, such as boat leans and strokes, creates a more effective response. Develop an awareness of how body movements, paddle sensitivity and energy transfer among muscle groups all affect the boat's reaction. Anticipate and set up your moves in advance. Practice and fine tune your skills on flat water and mellow rapids. Physical conditioning, muscle memory and quicker reflexes are additional benefits of repetitive practice.

There are several good instructional books and videos available covering up to date play-boating techniques. You may also want to seek qualified instruction if you have limited paddling experience.

Paddle safely,

Harold Deal



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