

By now, many of you are thinking about Instructor Training for the upcoming summer season. The key to providing the best instruction for the juniors in your program is planning, preparation, and a solid game plan. Below I will outline a multi-year plan for instructor training that I recommend to clubs.

Start early. Most clubs wait until an instructor candidate is 16, the first year they are legally able to enroll in a US Sailing level-1 course. I would argue that you can start before that. When your junior instructors are 14 or 15, enroll them in either a US Sailing Powerboat course or a US Sailing Camp Counselors course (see below). The Powerboat course teaches young instructors the finer points of driving a powerboat and teaches them the skills necessary to maneuver a safety boat in and around small sail boats in a safe manner. Likewise, the Camp Counselor course, which is designed for instructors who are teaching a summer camp, teaches liability, risk management, and basic skill instruction. These are excellent skills for junior instructors to hone. The second step on the educational pathway is the US Sailing Level-1 Instructor Course. This is an evaluation course where the Instructor Trainer reviews the candidate's ability to (a) interact as part of a team, (b) drive a powerboat, and (c) sail any boat with poise. They also evaluate the candidates on their ability to teach in a classroom, conduct land drills, and supervise activities on the water. Many clubs think that Level-1 will teach their instructors how to teach. While there is a great deal of information to glean from the course, the main focus is evaluation, so the candidate better arrive at the course with good basic skills. They also better arrive prepared. There is roughly 400 pages of text that must be digested before attending. Those with limited skills and lack of preparation often receive a plan of improvement (POI) instead of passing the course. All that tells you as a program director is that your instructor is not ready to teach your kids yet.

The third year instructors should attend a US Sailing level-2 Workshop. Unlike level-1 which is an evaluation course, level-2 is designed as a venue to share ideas and learn new techniques. The workshop is set up for those individuals who are slated to coach racing at the club level, but is also geared towards and valuable for senior instructors, head instructors, and program directors. If Level-1 is college, Level-2 is Grad School. Often, clubs support an active race program. At the end of the season, I hear parents lament the lack of perceived success their kids achieved. My question to them is why do you expect better results when you are unwilling to dedicate resources to your coach to learn the latest and best techniques?

Finally, once an instructor has completed Power Boating, Level-1 Instructor and Level-2 Coach, they should be steered towards the US Sailing Race Management seminar. These seminars are designed in both a one-day and two-day format. The former is excellent for individuals who will be running club races; the latter for those running more regional and national events. Having individuals on staff who know the ins and outs of running a race, make for a better experience of everyone at the club. And, it helps a race coach understand their craft better too.

Since the main benefit to a club is the certification and insurance benefits associated with that card, it is important that they follow through and stay on top of all the requirements for certification (US Sailing membership, CPR & First Aid, etc). That is why I recommend that clubs reimburse instructors when they complete the certification

process and not pay for a course upfront. Reimbursement puts the onus on the instructor to complete the task. Furthermore, I recommend that clubs reimburse half the fee the first year and the other half if they come back for a second year. This way, a club does not end up paying for training that is ultimately a benefit to another club. Also, it helps with retention of instructors which makes it easier to create continuity which is the sign of a successful program at any level.

In summary, follow a four year training path with your staff. Get organized early by signing your instructors up for courses with plenty of time to review and digest that material or to practice their skills before they are evaluated. Also agree to reimburse your instructors over a two year period when they complete the certification process. This will help make sure that you have a staff that is attentive, up to date, and motivated. Just my thoughts!

US Sailing Training Information:

Power Boat Course -

http://training.ussailing.org/Learning/Small_powerboat_handling/Safe_powerboat_handling_standards.htm)

Camp Councilors course -

[http://training.ussailing.org/Teaching/Small Boat Instructor Certifications/Sailing Counselor Courses.htm](http://training.ussailing.org/Teaching/Small_Boat_Instructor_Certifications/Sailing_Counselor_Courses.htm)).

Level-1 Instructor Course -

[http://training.ussailing.org/Teaching/Small Boat Instructor Certifications/Small Boat Level 1 Instructor.htm](http://training.ussailing.org/Teaching/Small_Boat_Instructor_Certifications/Small_Boat_Level_1_Instructor.htm)

Level-2 Coach Workshop -

[http://training.ussailing.org/Teaching/Small Boat Instructor Certifications/Small Boat Level 2 Coach.htm](http://training.ussailing.org/Teaching/Small_Boat_Instructor_Certifications/Small_Boat_Level_2_Coach.htm)

Race Management Seminar - [http://raceadmin.ussailing.org/Race Officers.htm](http://raceadmin.ussailing.org/Race_Officers.htm)