

OC6 Huli Recovery



Introduction:

The purpose of this write-up is to demonstrate an easy method of righting the OC6 following a huli. All members of the crew should make themselves familiar with the responsibilities of every seat, even if they only paddle in one particular seat. You never know when an injury may prevent another paddler from performing their duties so be prepared to take their place to help the crew. Everyone needs to be certain that their team mates know their duties. Do not leave the dock if your crew cannot take care of themselves in the event of a huli. Be flexible, this method of recovery should be altered if different circumstances call for it.

Huli Prevention:

A huli can be avoided by keeping several basic concepts in mind. Never lean right. Your body should remain centred in the canoe except in rough conditions where you may be required to lean left to keep the ama down. This is especially important when docking; leaning left when docking will not only help resist the temptation to reach for the dock but it will also open a clear line of sight for the steersperson. In big waves, the steersperson should be close to perpendicular to the wave front. The boat should never be at more than 45 degrees to the wave front except when turning back (turn as quick as possible and always turn left, not right). The steersperson must also watch for other hazards that may cause the boat to flip, such as a possible collision or wake from large vessels. Seat 5 is responsible for watching the ama and telling the paddlers to lean left when necessary.

After The Huli:

A huli happens very quickly. When the ama lifts too high, chances are slim that a crew will stop the huli. Seats 2 and 4 can protect their heads from the iako by leaning forward. Once in the water, remain calm. Do not leave the boat. The steersperson will yell "Head count!" Yell back your seat number starting with Seat 1. Stow your paddle inside the canoe so it will not float away. Check on your partners; Seat 1 checks 2, Seat 2 checks 1 and 3, Seat 3 checks 2 and 4, etc. Look for any bleeding, irrational behaviour or other signs that they may be injured or panicked. Being confident and calm will help the team. The steersperson will now call you into your positions. Listen to and obey the steersperson. Barring a head injury, do not question his or her orders. Do not talk unless you are asked a question or you notice that there is a serious problem with the crew, the boat or your environment.

Getting Into Position:

Remain flexible and look out for those who need help; you may have to do what another paddler cannot. Seats 1 and 6 move to the bow and stern, Seats 2 and 5 swim to the outside of the ama and Seats 3 and 4 will prepare to climb the hull by using the iakos. Once in position, Seats 1 and 6 will pivot the boat so that it is perpendicular to the wave front. The steersperson will indicate which direction the boat will be pivoted in. Seats 3 and 4 must not climb up until the boat is in position; doing so adds unnecessary weight to the hull and also leaves the paddlers in a precarious balancing position for longer than necessary.





Getting Ready to Flip the Boat:

When the boat and paddlers are in position, Seats 3 and 4 will use the iakos to climb on top of the hull. An easy way to do this is to face the iako, put your inside leg on it, push down and swing your outside leg over the hull so that you are left straddling the canoe facing your partner. You should be in line with the iako and the muku (the small block of wood on the opposite side of the hull). Be careful on the hull as it is very slippery; keep your centre of gravity low. Avoid being knocked off by any large waves. Seats 1 and 6 must keep the boat perpendicular to the wave front throughout the recovery. On the call of the steersperson, Seats 3 and 4 will swing over and carefully balance on the muku. Seats 2 and 5 will prepare to throw the ama up (think of a shot-put throw). Seats 2 and 5 should be in a position that will allow them to apply maximum force to move the ama up and towards seats 3 and 4.

Ready, 1, 2, 3...

Now that everyone is in position, the steersperson will yell something like "Ready! One! Two! Three!" On the count of three, Seats 2 and 5 will throw the ama up. At the same time, Seats 3 and 4 will catch each iako on its way up towards them and then fall back into the water holding onto the iako with the ama now behind them. Do a quick check to make sure that no one was injured in righting the boat. Seats 3 and 4 should now climb on top of the ama to help stabilize the boat and minimize exposure to the cold water.



Getting In (Seats 1, 2, 5 and 6):

On the steersperson's command, Seats 2 and 5 will get in first. Huli straps tied to the seats are used like a stirrup provided that they are available (before leaving the dock each practice you should check you have a huli strap attached to your seat). Step down on your strap and push down with your arms on the hull as though you were getting out of a swimming pool. At the same time, push down with your foot on the huli strap and swing your other leg over into the canoe. Be careful when getting in that you do not allow yourself to drop your torso on the gunwale with enough force to break a rib or wind yourself. If someone is struggling to get in, help them. Remaining in cold water will sap your energy quickly so get everyone out as fast as possible. Seats 2 and 5 must start bailing immediately with the large buckets. Seats 1 and 6 will now climb into the boat. They should also start bailing as soon as they are onboard. If Seats 2 and 5 are tired, 1 and 6 can take over with the large buckets. Seats 1 and 6 must remain aware of the direction of the boat, performing draw strokes as necessary to keep the boat perpendicular to the wave front.



Getting In (Seats 3 and 4):

With Seats 1, 2, 5 and 6 inside and bailing, Seats 3 and 4 can make their way into the boat. The steersperson will make the call as to who goes first. There are different ways to go from the iako to the boat. Some paddlers jump back into the water and use a huli strap while others prefer to slide across the iako to get in. The last person seated needs to be very careful when getting in as to avoid causing another huli. Seats 3 and 4 can now finish bailing as most of the water will now be pooled in the centre of the boat.

Getting To Safety:

If the conditions are particularly dangerous, all crew members may need to paddle to safety regardless of how much water is still in the boat. Bear in mind that the more water inside the boat, the heavier it is and the slower it will go. Get to land or the closest dock if there are any injuries to tend to. Change into dry clothing kept in a watertight bag. Any remaining water should be bailed out of the boat once there is no danger of another huli. The steersperson should decide if the crew needs a break or, if too cold, to head directly back to the GRPC. Reassure those who need it; being out in rough water in a dangerous situation can be quite overwhelming for some paddlers and they may need to be calmed down before heading back to the dock.

**Summary:**

Perhaps the most important things to remember in a huli situation are to stay calm and to follow the steersperson's orders. If people do not do what they are told, confusion and disorder can result in the recovery being compromised and the situation may worsen. If the steersperson was somehow incapacitated as a result of the huli, someone with a lot of experience, a commanding voice and a sound knowledge of huli recovery procedures should take charge. Only one person should command the boat to minimize confusion over conflicting orders. All active outrigger paddlers must practice huli drills at least once per year. The paddlers are responsible to themselves and their crew to read often and understand huli recovery procedures. Knowing exactly what to do will prevent an already bad situation from becoming a very dangerous one.