

WAVE on WAVE.

Relations with schools

I will try and tell you in a few words about the experiences we have had, in the Sport Nautique de Nancy, concerning the relations with schools, considering that these experiences are probably shared by most of you.

One problem we have to solve in Nancy, and this might be true of other partners of the project, is the fact that rowing, canoeing, diving and to some extent sailing are not as popular among the population as football, basket ball, or even athletics.

Among the means used to have our club known to more people, and especially young people, we try to develop relations with local schools. This is done in several ways.

In winter, coaches of our club go and visit primary and secondary schools, colleges, to which they bring ergometers, rowing machines. With these, they initiate the children to the basic gesture of rowing and make them go through a test over a short distance. They register the results and this helps, at the end of the winter, to have a hierarchy of the performances accomplished by the children.

The teachers of these schools can ask, and they often do, to come to the club with their classes in Spring and Autumn, when the weather is more favourable, to benefit from a series of training sessions on the water, using individual, flat-bottomed boats, very stable, especially designed for beginners. This type of boat permits the children to have a first contact with our sport. The number of sessions can vary from one to six.

The impact of these actions on recruiting new members depends on many factors. The weather of course is an important element in the attraction towards an open air sport. We also know that among young children, if one of them decides to join a club, several of his or her friends are likely to follow the example. Perhaps the most important factor that can appeal to would-be new members is the fact that the new activity they are acquainted with must not be considered as part of the school programme, because it would be in that case rejected by most of the children. This of course greatly depends on the personality of the coach and on his teaching methods.

Another way we have experienced for several years is to have a special link with a college, situated at a short distance from the club. This college has what we call a sport class, which consists of 12-year-old volunteers who come to the club to practise rowing once a week, under the supervision of their physical education teacher and a coach of the club. They engage themselves to participate to school regattas and championships. The aim is obviously for us to attract them to join the crews of our club.

A third action carried out once a year is to invite all the classes of the sixth grade of a college, that is 11-12-year-old, to come to the club for a whole day to discover rowing, and they are allowed to practise on several kinds of boats, on rowing machines and in our in-door training device. This is

usually carried out in June and concerns about a hundred children each time. This of course implies the motivation of our professional coaches and also of volunteers without whom all these efforts would be useless and inefficient.

Whatever their impact on recruiting, the main benefit of these activities relies on the fact that they make us known by quite a number of young people. They have proved quite successful, since for several years our club has been standing among the first three French clubs in the national ranking for 13-14-year-old.

Perhaps the partners of the Wave on Wave project apply other methods related to schools but I think we all agree on the necessity of being present in the educational network of our cities.