

Running Rigs, Dispatch and Storage

By Jason Walker

Setting up an anchor rig and how you will deal with your catch.



Anchoring and the Running Rig

Anchoring on a kayak is very different to anchoring your normal runabout! On a boat you walk up to the front of the boat and throw out a big steel anchor, a long length of chain followed by however much rope you need to use for your depth. Anchoring a kayak is a little different, for a start you can't just walk to the front and throw the anchor over...

So what you need to set up is something called an anchor running rig, this is in effect a rope of about 4 mm diameter that runs along the side of the kayak from the cockpit to the front, through a pulley, all the way to the rear of the kayak and back to the cockpit giving you in effect an endless loop. To attach your anchor to this running rig will depend on the fittings. The running rig will have either a stainless steel rig where the ends of the rope joins or it will be knotted in such a way that there is a tail of approximately one metre coming from the running rig with a clip or other attachment at the end.

To anchor your kayak you then attach your chosen anchor to your style of running rig. It is now at this point that the running rig comes into it's own; from the comfort of the seat of your kayak you can choose to anchor from the front or the rear of the kayak just by moving your running rig between the pulleys.

As with boats there are two anchor types at our disposal, the fixed anchor and the sea anchor or drogue, they are just smaller models on a kayak. For the fixed anchor you will be looking for an anchor in the weight range of 0.75 to 1.5 kilograms, and depending on the sea floor landscape you'll be wanting to use one of two fixed anchor types, a collapsible cast anchor or a wire grapnel anchor. The latter type of anchor should be used when

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anchoring in kelp or rocky sea beds as the grapnel prongs can be bent and pulled free if the grapnel gets stuck, whereas the collapsible fixed anchor is great for anchoring in a sandy or muddy seabed.

As with most kayak fishing accessories there has been a lot of thought put into how you package and use these accessories on a kayak. The fixed anchor has not been ignored, shown here is the kayak anchor system made by Tagit right here in New Zealand. They have used a 1.5 kg collapsible anchor, some short link chain, and approximately 30 metres of 4 mm rope, all wound on to a plastic winder that floats, this gives you the ability to disconnect from your anchor, if you need to go and chase a fish for example, the winder can be thrown in the water and will be floating on the surface when you return.

The second anchor type used is the sea anchor or drogue. This is in effect a parachute that you cast over the side and as the wind blows you across the sea the anchor will drag through the water to slow you down. It won't stop you altogether like a fixed anchor will but nor is it meant to, it



is only designed to slow your drift to a manageable level so you can fish. Even though you are fishing from a very small vessel it doesn't necessarily translate to you needing a small sea anchor - when looking for a drogue type sea anchor you should be looking for a model between 75 to 100 cm (30 - 40 inches). Another important safety point when using a sea anchor is you must make sure it has either a float attached to it or an integrated flotation system, this is not to make it float on the surface for easy retrieval but to ensure the anchor does not sink, if it did sink and a large swell came through the anchor would pull your kayak down and/or roll your kayak and you'll end up in the water.

Choosing whether to have your anchor running from the front or rear of your kayak will be determined by several factors. Fishing method is the first factor. If bait fishing is your method of choice you will normally be fishing with the current. i.e. you anchor up-current from your target fish and drift baits back to the fish using the current. If you have dropped a burley bomb into the water this will also make sure the burley is going in the same direction. For this method of fishing you want to use a fixed anchor with the running rig holding the anchor from the rear of the kayak.

If drift fishing with soft baits, for example, is your preferred fishing method you will be using a sea anchor rather than a fixed heavy anchor as you don't want to be fixed in one spot. A sea anchor will control your movement in relation to the wind direction not the current, so where you set your anchor on your kayak will be a matter of your fishing style. Some people like to fish in front of the drift, i.e. cast ahead of the drift so you end up drifting over the bait when it is at it's lowest point and hopefully in the strike zone, this would see you setting the anchor so you have the wind on your back. Others prefer to fish the area they have drifted over already, sort of stray lining their soft bait through the water column, in this case you would want your anchor set so the wind is in your face.



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Swell and waves are another factor to take into consideration when deciding which way to anchor your kayak. You do not want to put yourself in a position where you will end up beam, or side on to the waves, especially if they are breaking. This is a very easy way to ensure you end up in the water. If I find myself fishing in less than ideal conditions due to a change in the weather or swell, then I will change my running rig so I have my bow facing the swell, this lowers the chance of being rolled out of my kayak by a wave and also allows me to see what is coming. If a wave is going to break over me then I can see it coming and prepare for it, whereas if I had my back to it I would not have time to react.

Dealing with your catch

As with any fishing it's very important to look after your catch and not let it spoil; there is no point in taking fish from the sea if you are not going to make good use of it. Dealing with your catch on a kayak is very similar to the way you would deal with it on a bigger boat too. You need to dispatch it and store it, preferably in some sort of cooled storage, not just left on the deck in the sun. Catch it, kill it, chill it, cook it.

The Stringer



There is one additional step you need to consider that is specific to kayaking – fish retention! Depending on what method of fish storage you decide to use, if you are storing your fish in the rear well of your kayak and it

is not in a fully enclosed bag or bin then you will need to ensure it is attached to the kayak in case of a roll over. You don't want those fish to get away after



Stephen Tapp of Viking Kayaks demonstrates the loading of a Snapper into the rear of his Viking Profish 440

you've worked so hard to catch them do you? This is where the stringer comes into play. A stringer consists of a long stainless steel rod or needle attached to a length of rope or cord which in turn is attached to your kayak at the back of the rear well.

When you have caught a fish that you intend to keep, before you unhook, or even dispatch it if you wish, you unclip the stringer from your kayak and slip the stringer in through the gills, out of the mouth of the fish, and reattach it to the kayak, your fish is now on the stringer and cannot be lost even if you drop it over the side. You can now unhook the fish, dispatch it,



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Insulated fish bag

These have become very popular over the last 12-18 months. They started out as an extension of the insulated well covers with only the top insulated and the rest of the bag only a single layer of the PVC canvas. The manufacturer has now moved to make fully insulated bags. This means all sides of the bag are now the same construction as the top. This has led to a far better solution for keeping your catch fresh in an ice slurry as the bag not only slows down the melting of the ice but also keeps all the fishy liquid locked away so there is no need for bungs etc. These insulated bags from Tagit have been made for most of the current kayaks models on the market.

Fish ice bin

This is the latest and greatest advance in kayak fish storage, it is in effect a full on roto moulded chilly bin, and this one from Ocean Kayak has been designed to fit into their Prowler 4.7 Ultra and the latest Prowler 4.3 Ultra kayaks. They will keep your ice frozen and your fish in top condition all day. The other great advantage of these is when you are done fishing you simply unclip it from your kayak, lift it out and throw in into the back of the car for the trip home, no need to transfer the fish to another chilly bin for transportation. I expect we will see similar offerings from other kayak manufacturers in the future for their kayaks too.



and store it. The stringer will also help with this manoeuvre too, you can grab the cord now coming from the mouth of the fish and simply slide the fish down the line until it ends up in your rear well.

The Dispatch

The quickest, cleanest, and most accepted method of dispatching a fish is to iki it. Iki Jime is a method of paralysing and bleeding fish to maintain its quality. The technique originated in Japan but is now widely used. It involves the insertion of a spike quickly and directly into the hind brain thereby causing immediate brain death. A fish brain is usually located slightly behind and above the eye. When spiked correctly, the fish fins flare and the fish relaxes, immediately ceasing all motion. The blood contained in the fish flesh retracts to the gut cavity, which produces a better coloured and flavoured fillet. You can iki a fish using a knife but a better tool would be an iki spike.

Fish storage and keeping it cool

Storing your catch on a kayak can be done in several ways. All fishing kayaks made today have been designed with a rear well for fish storage. However there are several options of how to store your fish in this well. The three main options I'll discuss here are an insulated cover, an insulated fish bag, and the recently introduced purpose designed fish ice bin. But before I cover the different options it is important to point out that whatever method you decide to use for storage you still need to ensure your catch is chilled or it will spoil. To do this put ice or better still make up a slurry of ice and salt water into your rear well/bag/bin. Salt ice is always going to be better but fresh ice with some saltwater thrown in is still better than nothing.

Insulated well cover

This is the most basic of solutions; it is made from two pieces of PVC canvas with a piece of foam sandwiched in-between. It is then stretched over the entire well to protect your fish from the sun and heat. They also have a pocket sewn into the top for some additional storage. If you use this type of cover you will need to fit bungs into the scuppers of the rear well so that your ice or slurry does not simply drain away. If you choose to use this cover then the use of a stringer is essential in case of a rollover situation there will be nothing to keep your fish from being lost. You can find these covers for most kayaks on the market.

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