

The Back Deck Roll – by Ken Whiting

The back deck roll was developed from the need to roll as quickly as possible. I've heard it said that though it's a quick roll, it's also a dangerous roll as it leaves your face exposed, and puts the shoulder at risk. This is a myth. The back deck roll is considerably quicker than other rolls so less time is spent underwater, decreasing risk. Secondly, this roll actually does a great job of protecting the face, as your head stays near the surface of the water, while your arms provide a protective cage. When would you use the back deck roll? I use it all the time. Because of blade offsets, it's easier to perform the back deck roll flipping to the left, with your right blade doing the work.

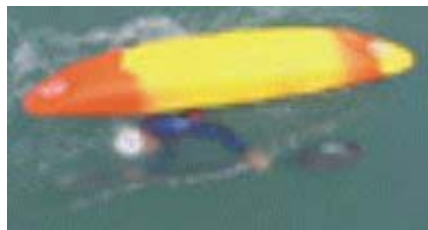
Start with your paddle held comfortably in front of your chest, with elbows hanging down. You've now formed a rectangle with your arms, paddle and chest. Rotate your chest 90 degrees to the left, keeping this rectangle intact. Now drop your left hand into the water at the hip, and bring your right hand about a foot in front of your face. Keep the left hand around your hip and your right hand in front of your face as you lean back and over the side of the kayak to speed your flip. If your body is rotated aggressively enough, your hands should remain in front of your body, keeping your shoulders safe



As you flip, cock your wrists back so that your right paddle blade naturally slices under your stern and back toward the surface.



By the time your boat is completely upside down, your face and paddle should be at the surface because you've continued to lead aggressively with your head and upper body.



Keeping your boat's flipping momentum going, swing your head and your right blade from the stern out to the side of the kayak, with your wrists still cocked back so the right blade is fighting to reach the surface. It is this sculling angle on your right blade that provides the leverage for you to snap your kayak upright.



Continue to sweep your head and right blade in a full arc that ends at the toes. By the end of your sweep, your hips should have snapped the boat completely upright, and your head should have been the last thing to swing back on top of your kayak.



You're now in an aggressive position, ready to go!

One of the things that makes the back deck roll so efficient is how quickly you can rotate your torso and throw your body onto the back deck. Once you're comfortable with the back deck roll from a normal sitting position, start trying it while in the middle of taking various strokes. You'll be amazed at how well it works from any position.

