A Simple Rope System for Tying Down Canoes and Pre-Rigging a Stirrup Rescue
Ralphie G. Schwartz, Esq.
www.northland.edu/oe

Part 2, The Stirrup Rescue
Return to Page 1

This is the heart of this version of the Stirrup Rescue system. Starting on the left, the loop is positioned over the side (same side as the swimmer), the rope is passed over the rail (gunwale), under the thwart, over the rail, under the hull, over the rail, and is wrapped around the opposite end of the thwart for easy adjustment. Use enough wraps to generate sufficient friction to hold the weight of the swimmer when the wraps are held in place by the off-side hand. The trick is to get the rope from the bow grab thwart, under the hull, and into this configuration.
Here is the bow line (loosely) girth hitched in place, much as it would be in use.

With a swimmer in the water, our bow rescuer unfastens the Girth Hitch to free the bow line.
With the loop end in one hand (and on the same side as the swimmer), and the other end in the opposite hand, the bow rescuer flips the middle of the rope over the bow. This puts the rope under the hull, with the loop and free end on the appropriate sides.

With the rope under the hull, the bow rescuer passes the ends back to the stern rescuer, who rigs the system as shown in the photo at the top of the page.
Here is the rigging in progress.

The swimmer's foot is placed in the stirrup, as demonstrated here. At this stage, the height of the stirrup in the water can be adjusted using the thwart wraps on the opposite end of the thwart.
With her foot in the stirrup, the swimmer stands up and works at pulling herself over the rail and into the canoe. Her rescuers assist by pulling **on the shoulder straps of the PFD**. Once the swimmer's hips are over the rail, she rolls onto her back and drops her hips into the canoe. It is strongly recommended that, if another canoe is available, the two canoes 'raft up' for this rescue, thereby forming a wide, stable platform. On open water, as opposed to the pool, the PFD would be sized one-size-too-small, zipped, belted, and secured.

And a good rescue was had by all.

© 2003,
Ralphie G. Schwartz