



Photo Illustration by Lynn Novakofski

# Spring Winds

Written by Freddy Krueger

**W**ith spring just around the corner, getting back on our jump skis is ever more in our thoughts. But with spring comes wind and we all know wind can be a most frustrating challenge. I have talked with many jumpers over the years and for the most part, everyone likes a headwind. But what do we do if the headwind is more than we want, or more importantly, what do we do if it is not a headwind? I'll go through each of the four primary wind directions and give you some tips on how you might adjust your technique.

## Headwind

A headwind seems to be everybody's ideal jump condition. For myself, I always preferred to jump in a tailwind until I was jumping about 160 feet, because it was easier for me to build more speed in the tailwind and I really wasn't traveling fast enough to utilize the headwind in the air. But whether you prefer a headwind or not, we still need to know how to jump in one. The three challenges we will fight in a headwind are trouble getting wide on the boat, keeping our speed up into our turn, and dealing with the wind off the top of the ramp.

If you start from the 600-foot ball and work your way through the jump, the biggest mistake I see jumpers make is not adjusting enough at the 600-foot ball, and therefore, they pull longer on the counter cut to make sure they create enough speed for their turn. For me personally, I like to keep my length and intensity of my counter cut the same in a headwind as it would be in no wind. By doing this, I know that my glide time will be slightly less because the headwind is going to slow me down. So in no wind I will cut 620 feet from the jump, and in a headwind I will move closer to the 600-foot ball, eventually going around the 600 as we get into the white cap intensity winds. I then keep my length and intensity of counter cut the same, which compensates for my slowing down coming into my turn. The beauty of making the right adjustment at the 600 is that if I keep my counter cut exactly the same as it is when there is no wind, if my timing isn't right on my first jump I simply have to make another adjustment at the 600. I don't have to guess at what adjustment I should make at the 600 and how that should affect the length and intensity of my counter cut.

The last challenge of that headwind is going to be getting my flight path so that

I don't just go straight up in the air and not down the lake for added distance. As the headwind strengthens, I know that I must move through my tips and into my press faster and faster as the wind intensity increases. This is something I really believe you can work on doing single cuts until you are comfortable really pressing out over your skis quickly right off the top of the ramp. Then start working on this with three-quarter and double cuts.

## Tailwind

Tailwinds are definitely a little bit trickier. Again, most people compensate their counter cut by going a little easier, but shorter as well. The problem with this approach is that there is nothing consistent about it, and by cutting shorter off the second wake you take a different path to your turn and actually put yourself in a tougher position to turn. It is kind of like skiing right at the slalom ball and then trying to turn, versus making sure you ski wide and early on the buoy and still get that good turn.

What is interesting is that in a tailwind people are much more likely to back up on the 600 further than they would move closer to the 600 in the same type of intensity



headwind. So if we look at what I do in a headwind then I should be doing something similar in a tailwind. So if I normally go 620 on the 600-buoy in no wind, I will back up to 630 in a tailwind and as the wind intensity increases, I might back up to 640 and eventually 650 in a white-cap wind. The key to good skiing in a tailwind is to stay intense. You have to attack your counter cut the same way you would if there was no wind or even a headwind. The trick to the tailwind is what I call controlling your line (or rope) as you release. If you make sure that as you release on your counter cut that you keep moving out away from the wakes and try to not allow yourself to run parallel with the boat, you will keep the rope tight and have just the right amount of speed and momentum to move through your turn, just like you would if there is no wind.

As you come into the bottom of the ramp remember to keep your intensity up. I see people try to back off their cuts in a tailwind and this is a huge mistake. As you back off, you are actually letting up your pendulum swing earlier, which means you give up your direction and are therefore hitting the ramp very hard straight on. If you keep up the intensity of your cut you will travel across the ramp more and have a smoother transition onto the ramp. By keeping an intense cut to the bottom, you have a tighter line off the top of the ramp and it will make you feel much more in control. Remember, you will be coming off the ramp at 45 to 60 miles per hour. Even if you are jumping in a 20 miles per hour wind you are still moving faster than the wind so you still have tip pressure. What you need to make it feel good is a tight line! When I was a kid there was an old expression we used to help you remember to hold onto the handle if you were crashing: "No Rope... No Hope." I tell myself that same thing in a tailwind and the way to make sure I have the rope is to keep my intensity up on the cuts, not back off.

### Cross Wind, Right-to-Left (Tailwind to the Jump)

Crosswinds can be tricky because they are a combination of headwind and tailwind. If the wind is blowing right-to-left, it will feel like a headwind on your counter cut and a tailwind on your cut to the jump. If the wind is blowing 20 mph right-to-left, I will treat it like a 10 mph headwind at the 600 buoy. Since the wind will be in my face on the counter cut it will slow me down a little

while I cut, but not so much while I glide. So I would cut around 610 feet and keep my intensity and length of counter cut the same. Here it is especially important to make sure you release on your counter cut and keep your direction moving out away from the wakes and the boat. Because the wind is going to want to blow you back into the boat during your glide, it is critical you really feel your way through this part of the jump, making sure to keep your line tight so you can get a good turn. Then as I come into my turn I want to make sure that I really concentrate on finishing my turn and letting things develop slowly so that I can really finish strong into the bottom of the ramp. In the air, you will have to feel the wind out and see if you need to move faster through your tips like a headwind, or just move a little slower than normal.

### Crosswind, Left-to-Right (Headwind to the Jump)

Using the same approach as we did for the other crosswind, if I have a 20 mph wind blowing left-to-right, I will divide that amount in half and treat it like a 10 mph tailwind on my counter cut. So I back up to 630 feet and keep the intensity and length the same on the counter cut. This time in my glide the wind will be acting a little bit like a headwind as far as helping keep my line tight. The key on this setup is making sure I keep my speed up into my turn so that I can really get my skis around at the finish of the turn. Because the wind will be in my face as I cut back to the ramp, and wanting to blow me back to the boat in

the air, it is critical that I have good timing and work hard to keep my direction moving out away from the boat off the top of the ramp. Again, in the air, you will have to feel the wind out to decide if you need to move through your skis faster into your press to get your projected path down the lake right, or if you need to slow that movement down like a tailwind.

Hopefully, if you practice these things as you ride your skis this spring in the wind and get ready for the season, you will find confidence in those tournaments this year when the wind really gets up on you. Remember to make your adjustments where you turn at the 600-foot buoy and not on the intensity or length of your counter cut, and I promise you will find consistency you have never enjoyed before. I truly believe that by being consistent in what you do and how you adjust at the 600 will give you confidence in what to expect. When you have that confidence you will be able to adjust your timing quickly and efficiently when the wind is up, or even if it is changing during your set. And if you really think about it, the ability to adapt to our ever-changing environment is the difference from performing well occasionally or performing well consistently.

*If you have questions about jumping you would like Freddy to help you with, make sure to go to [TheNightmare13.com](http://TheNightmare13.com) and send Freddy a question for his "Question of the Week." Freddy is sponsored by MasterCraft Boats, Zero Off Speed Controls, D3 Skis, OJ Props, Body Glove Wetsuits, Nightmare13, and Masterline Ropes.*

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