

Swivel Skiing - The 180 Split Catch

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Photography by Lynn Novakofski

The 180 split catch is similar to an extended hand-to-hand flip turn, but in this case the rope is passed and caught between the legs in the back position. I prefer to execute the 180 split catch with the free leg in the front swan position.

As you start the turn in the swan position, the body and free leg stay in line and remain so throughout the 180-degree turn to the back. As you turn to the back, the handle is held with the hand away from the direction of turn and pulled under the free leg. It is important at this point to push the handle down.

As the free hand grasps the handle between the legs, I really concentrate on keeping my chest up by pulling my shoulders back and arching my back as much as I can. That, together with keeping everything tight, meaning squeezing my butt, abs, leg and back, makes for a controlled and very pretty execution. The natural tendency is to drop the shoulders when turning to reach for the handle, but this will cause your weight to shift away from the boat and very likely a short swim.

When turning, I take my free leg from the back swan and pull it around aiming for the boat and flipping my leg over the

rope as if I were doing an extended hand-to-hand flip turn. Remember to push the rope between your legs, look at the tree line behind, and arch your back. Lastly, pull your leg up so that you are doing a pretty split.

You can either recover in the same direction or continue the rotation for a 360-degree turn. Again, the "tight" principles apply and it is also important when recovering to let the rope pull do the turning. This will enable you to have a tight line, which means better control, for the recovery. I would suggest practicing the recovery in both directions, and as you

become comfortable with the "catch," you will be able to eliminate stopping in the back position and execute a continuous 360-degree turn.

For a reverse split catch, the turn is toward the free leg. I prefer to start with the leg in front, do the reverse flip, then move my free leg around toward the boat and make the catch at that point. As you turn to the back, the handle is pulled under the free leg with one hand. During this turn, I really concentrate on doing a 180 to the back and holding the rope down between my legs. If you like, you can hold the handle with both hands in the backward position with your free leg in front of you until you are comfortable to bring it around to the split catch. For the reverse you really have to force the handle down and fight the boat trying to make you recover.

Once you get this trick it will be one of your favorites. It was a hard trick for me to learn, but I love it now. The key to this trick is handle down and chest up!



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