

SLALOM INSTRUCTION-PROPER EDGE CHANGE

Written by Terry Winter

Photograph by TKW Photography

Through all of the levels (beginner through advanced), one of the most common mistakes I see as a coach is skiers' initiating the edge change with the upper body. This results in loss of outward direction, and in return causes the finish of the turn to be delayed.

The more effective way to change edges is to maintain the upper body position through the transition, and allow only the lower body to swing through to the new edge.

As the body crosses the midpoint of the wakes the boat begins to pull the shoulders and the upper body back in toward the wakes. The mistake the skier makes is allowing this to happen too easily. It's easy to spot... the lead shoulder begins to lift back in toward the boat, and the elbows get stretched away from the core of the body. This pulls your body out of a leveraged position, pulls the ski toward being flat, causes the path of the ski to head straight down the lake (parallel to the boat's path) and causes the skier to finish the turn farther down course than is desired.

What the skier wants is to be able to maintain that outward direction out wide of the buoy even as the ski switches from cutting edge to turning edge. The wider the skier can travel

out before the buoy, the more the turning can be completed even before the buoy is ever reached. A turn set up from wider is also much smoother and more controllable. If the ski's path is

narrow and straight to the buoy, the skier has to wait to reach the buoy before any commitment to the turn can be made. This results in either a hard finish to the turn, or just causes a turn to be made too far down course.

Here's how it should be done. Through the wakes, and even past the wakes, maintain some of the upper body and



lean away from the boat. Instead of letting the outside shoulder lift back in toward the wakes, keep the shoulders level. Do whatever it takes to keep the shoulders and the rest of the upper body in the same position that they were in behind the boat. The elbows should stay right where they were during the cut, right on the sides of the vest. The chest should remain

upright, the elbows stay tucked in to the body, and the hips should stay up close to the handle. Instead of letting the upper body get pulled back in, keep it leaning away from the boat and moving across the course. Allow the ski to swing through beyond the upper body and on to the new turning edge by softening up the legs and letting the ski release from the load it built up during the acceleration. From the boat, the skier should look quiet and still from the waist up. It's the ski, the knees and hips that should be doing most of the movement. This will result in more direction across the course through the edge-change transition, and allow the turns to be set up earlier and from a wider point.

The skiers that understand and are able to do this are the ones running into 41 feet off, setting records and making it look easy as they do it. Skiers who don't quite have these moves and positions down look like they're moving around much more on the ski, and make skiing look fast and unpredictable at any speed or rope length.



Terry Winter is a professional slalom skier from Sacramento, Calif. His personal best is 3 buoys at 41 feet off. For more information on Terry, visit www.skiwestcoast.com and www.tkwphotography.com.