

The Transition Zone

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Now that we have learned to ski a more obtainable line (see July/August issue, page 30), the next question we should be asking ourselves is what happens behind the boat and out to the turn?

It is important that we remember those arcing turns to set up great wake crossings and efficient edge changes. As we approach the wakes we are finishing that arc where we are not loading, but rather trying to be one moment ahead to the line. You will look very similar to how you have always looked, except since there is not an excessive ski angle, you will be balanced thus more relaxed and confident.

I like to think of it as riding your ski, not fighting your ski. Your shoulders will be open to the boat, the handle will be low and close to your front leg, and your legs will be fairly straight, but not locked out or pushing. Since there is no fighting involved, essentially you are just focused on falling away from the handle. As you come into the wakes, keep your focus on falling away from the handle and feel your trailing hip come up to the handle. From buoy one to buoy two, your trailing hip would be your right hipbone. The trailing hip should reach the handle by the second wake or just thereafter.

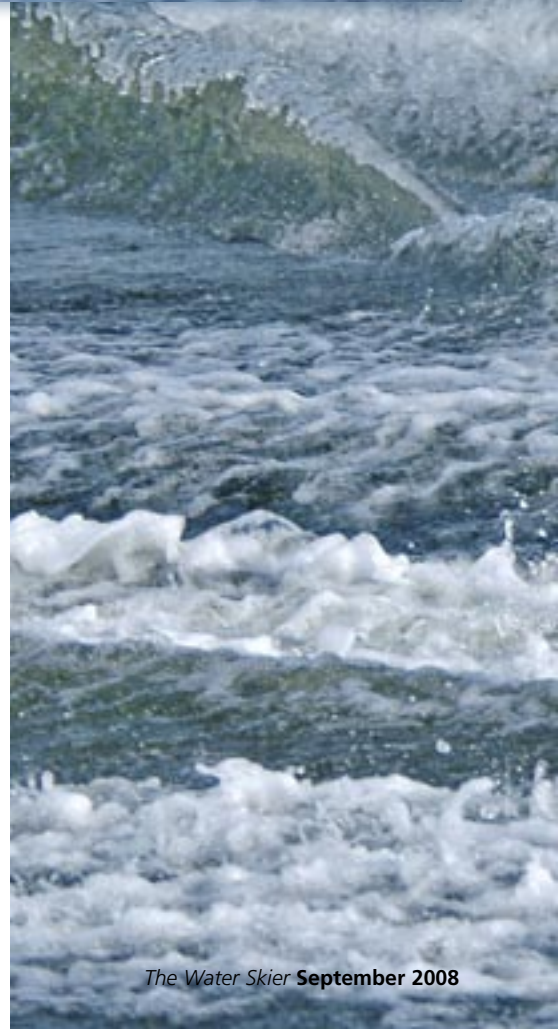
To envision what just happened, from apex to just before the wakes the hips and lower body are falling closer and closer to the water. When they reach the point that they cannot fall any farther (maximum ski edge roll over), there is only one way to go and that is up. If the skier tries to hold the hips low, a heavy load will be applied to the upper body, causing it to be pulled up toward the boat and effectively reducing ski angle even more.

The most important thing to remember is that we cannot hold any one position for



more than one moment. Don't look for one position, just be dynamic and go with the flow. As the trailing hip rises, the ski edge pressure is reduced. This loss of ski pressure allows the ski to release so that edge change can happen. Stay focused on being away from the handle with the upper body. Do not engage your biceps, but rather feel the trailing hip come up. The ski will release off the second wake, and allow it to land on the other edge. Essentially it feels like your upper body stays in the same leaned away position and your lower body swings underneath you.

It is vital to know that any upper body work here, like pulling of your biceps only moves the upper body in, *not* the ski out. This is the point where the majority of skiers lose the most ground in the course. Focus on feeling your upper body slowly come back up to vertical. Do not try to make this happen, just feel it happen. When you feel that your upper body is vertical, let go with your outside hand. This lets the ski continue on its most out-bound trajectory. When you let go with the outside hand, focus on leaving the handle where it is and skiing away from



the handle. Keep skiing away from the handle all the way to the point that you feel the slightest inward pull from the boat. This is the apex.

Remember that the development of these techniques takes time. The articles I have written this year will take you years to fully develop. They are meant to help you develop a solid mental foundation from which you can build a great skiing technique. Results will not happen overnight. Stay at slower, longer passes while developing these techniques. If you are not able to apply the lessons in your skiing, you are

training at too fast a speed or too short a line length. I develop technique at my starting line length. Only when I am able to comfortably apply the techniques do I shorten the rope. For more discussion on this and many other slalom related topics, check out proskicoach.com]. Good luck

and enjoy the learning process.

Chris Rossi is a professional skier and coach who is sponsored by Radar Skis, Tige Boats and Performance Ski & Surf. For more discussion on this and many other ski-related topics, visit proskicoach.com and slashslalom.com.

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