

## INSTRUCTION: Slalom

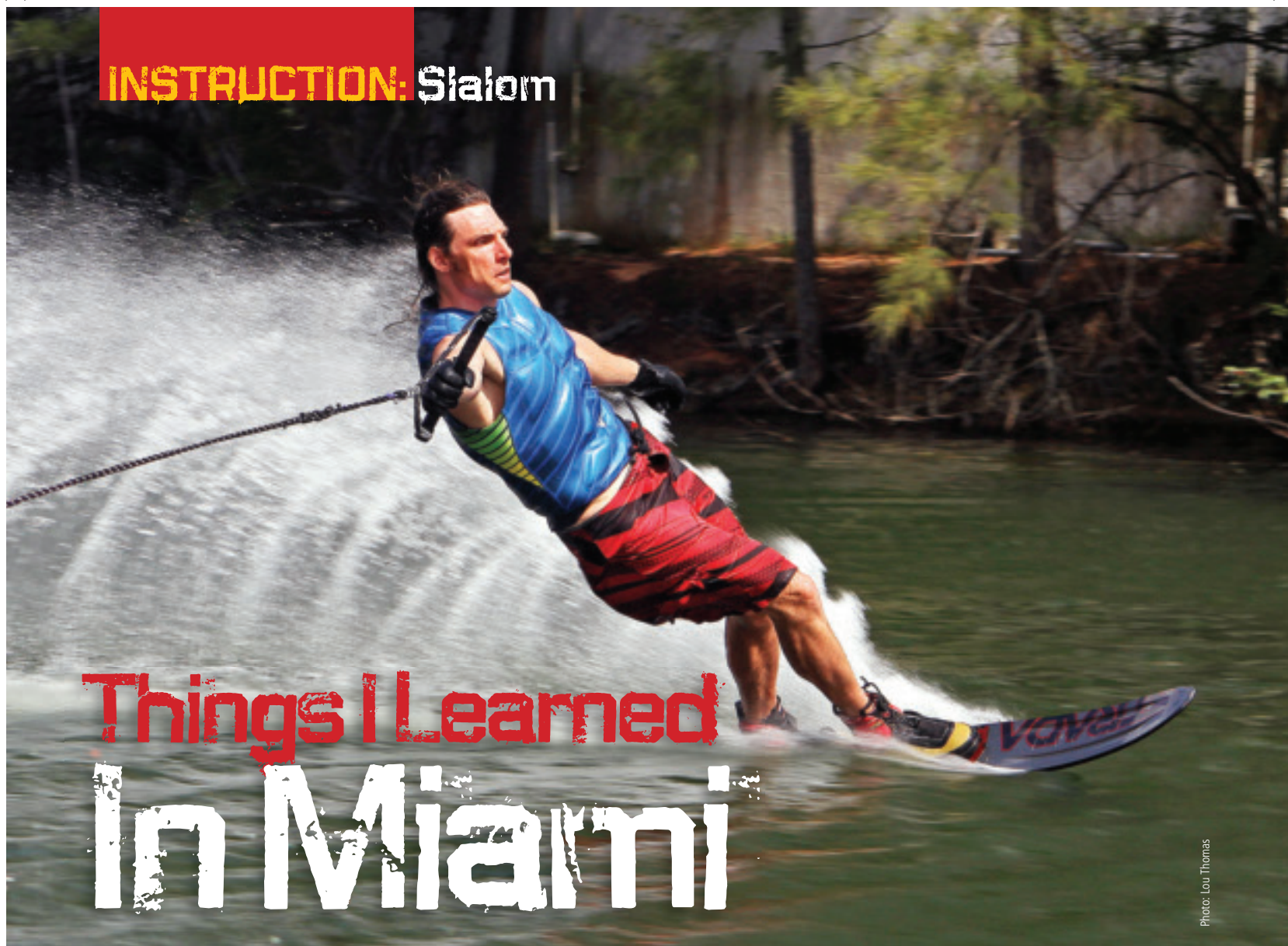


Photo: Lou Thomas

# Things I Learned In Miami

Written by Chris Rossi

I recently enjoyed water a ski vacation to Miami with my good friend and fellow pro slalom skier Jamie Beauchesne, and Jamie brought a few new things to my attention that I would like to share with you. These things apply to both slalom skiing and life. I would like to thank Henrik and Kim Laursen as well as Lou Thomas of Miami Ski Nautique for being great hosts, and also extend a big thanks to all of the members of the Greater Miami Ski Club who allowed us the water time.

**Have fun even when you are serious.** The reason we started skiing in the first place was that we had fun doing it. This is a key that many people choose to forget over time. It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day grind and lose sight of the real reasons we do things. It is time to make skiing fun again. Jamie mentioned this new snow ski movie I needed to watch called G.N.A.R. (it's free to watch). Its basic premise is bringing fun back into a sport that has become over regulated and kind of stuffy. The next time you are at the lake, play a joke on your ski partner or anyone

who is taking themselves too seriously; or do a tick tock because it is fun; or spray anyone who dares to stand too close to the dock when you ski in. We all need to have more fun if we want to grow this sport.

**Being wide for the gates just makes loose rope.** I was edging out for my gates too far so after changing edge that it was extremely hard to have a tight line to turn in for the gates. If the line is at all loose, you end up having to rotate (skid) the ski to bring the line tight to start accelerating. This leads to premature overloading of the

line and tends to encourage front arm skiing (right arm through the gates). In an ideal situation, I would like to be turning in for the gates with a tight line and be able to ski my left hip and left hand on to the handle, and allow that to be where my connection comes from. If the line is tight and I ski into the left side of the handle, then I will be accelerating instantly with my ski pointed in a direction that I can maintain. I find that most skiers, including myself, tend to get loaded up on the right side of the handle going through the gates, taking way too much angle into the second wake. The problem with this style of skiing is that it is impossible to continue out in that direction. The load becomes so great that the skier gets peeled to the inside of the optimal path. So if I want a tight rope at the apex, I need to have a tight rope in the pre turn. To have a tight rope in the pre turn, the first thing I need to do is point my ski in a direction that it can travel.



Photo: Chris Rossi

**LEFT: Jamie Beauchesne**

**OPPOSITE: Chris Rossi skiing with a tight line in Miami.**

**BELOW: Lou Thomas, pro shop manager at Miami Ski Nautique, shreds an early season set at the**



Photo: Chris Rossi

Jamie's recommendation is to not even think about where your ski is pointed while edging out for the gates. Focus on standing tall over the front foot, having the handle low with elbows close to the body but not bent, and when you want to edge out, pivot off the right hand/right hip connection while keeping your ski pointed more down the lake than out. Set this edge, but you do not need to hold it for a long time. Keep your right arm connection and allow your ski to roll out to the turning edge. Your right hand should remain the dominant hand, holding on to the tight rope for an instant or two longer than you would think (doesn't work if you edge out too wide and don't have a tight rope). Then let go with the left (outside) hand and ski away from the handle while keeping the line tight. The feeling is that you are the weight on the end of the handle. When you reach the apex, there

should be a pull from the boat that starts the right hip to be pulled in toward the boat, which initiates the finish of the turn. Do not rotate your upper body at all here. Just focus on the pull coming through your right side and allow your left hip/left hand to ski onto the handle. When they connect, focus on this left connection as your main pivot point, and trust it all the way into the center of the wakes.

**Taking too much angle too long after the centerline creates slack.** As mentioned in the previous section, if your ski is pointed 90 degrees away from the boat at the second wake and the boat is traveling down the course at its set speed, there is no way to take this direction out to the buoy. The rope will become overloaded and rip you to the inside of the optimal (tight) line. As you enter the first wake, focus on your trailing arm and allow your

ski to point more in the direction of the buoy. By doing this, you allow your body to stay on a more skiable path out into the pre turn. Gone is the feeling that you have to be super strong to maintain your direction. What's there is a near effortless edge change that leaves us with a tight rope guiding us out to the buoy. When you have a tight rope, you are in control. Ninety-five percent of all falls result from not having a tight line. Video yourself and watch the rope. Anywhere it is not tight, you are off the best potential path. I would much rather be narrow with a tight rope than wide with a loose one.

**Do more than just ski.** Our body is a machine. The more we use it, the better developed it becomes. Because of skiing's intense nature, we can only ski a few passes everyday. Even though we get extremely sore from skiing, it is not enough to just ski. Add a cardio/athletic routine such as P90X or cross fit where circuit training is the main focus. It's great if you can lift heavy weights, but you need your muscles and tendons to know how to work together in a more dynamic way than a bench press. I like to set up between 6 to 10 stations where I do 10 reps as fast as I can (in control with proper technique) and move to the next station. Each station should work a different muscle group and alternate between pushing and pulling. This will help get your heart in shape. The major benefit to this is that your heart rate will recover much quicker at the end of each pass. This will leave you stronger for your more challenging passes. A common summer day of training for Jamie consists of a two-hour climbing session on the walls of Rumney, N.H., in the morning; food to replenish the body, followed by a grueling two-hour mountain bike ride; food to replenish the body; and a couple of evening sets on the water with his father, Pete. I know we all do not have the free time that Jamie does, but it should teach us that we could do more than we think our body is capable of. Also of interest here is that Jamie chooses to ski at the *end* of the day after blowing himself out with climbing and biking. If you can ski like this, imagine how strong you will feel the next time you are at a tournament!

Jamie does traveling clinics throughout the year. You can contact him through his Web site at [jamielski.com](http://jamielski.com) or find him on Facebook.

*Chris Rossi is sponsored by Radar Skis, Tige Boats, Performance Ski & Surf and pumpRocker. Be sure to check out his new Web site [slalomguru.com](http://slalomguru.com) for more on this and many other slalom skiing topics.*