

# Engaging The Front Of Your Skis

Written by **Freddy Krueger**  
Photography by **Scott Atkinson**

I've written quite a few articles for *The Water Skier*, and if you were to look back at most of them, you would see that I really have a hang up on what I call the "fundamentals of jumping." When we begin, we learn to get the weight on the balls of our feet, bend our knees, keep our head up, and freeze. Essentially, I am still working on the same things today. But over time, I am finding that in all the sensory stimulus of a double-cut jump, actually

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So one of the newest things I am working on is a "means to an end" philosophy on a problem I see not only myself struggle with, but also most every jumper that comes to ski with me. The problem is simply getting unbalanced in the turn to the jump and getting on your heels as you turn rather than using the balls of your feet. Now if I was to tell you to get more weight on the balls of your feet while you're turning, it would certainly help, but the question remains, "What is enough? What is too much?"

This struggle to explain the feeling has led me to think in different terms, and as I turn to the ramp, I am trying to get the 6 to 8 inches on the inside edge of my right ski to engage down in the water as I turn to the ramp. Likewise, on my counter cut, I would try to engage the 6 to 8 inches on the



inside edge of my left ski. **1**

If you were to put your skis on and stand on the dock and I asked you to engage this part of the ski while you turn to the ramp, you will find very quickly that the only way to do it is to bring your hips up over your bindings, and then gently press on the ball of your right foot. You absolutely can't stand on your heels and use this part of the ski to help your turn.

The benefit of using such a movement is that as you come out of your turn you will be able to keep your chest up, hips up and stay balanced and control your rate of exertion on the boat, rather than turn into a hole and engage the boat right out of the turn. I've tried to show the difference in the following sequence of pictures.

**Wrong Way:** In this picture **2** you will see the arrow on the asphalt is drawn pointing at my heel. Even though I look well balanced and in good posi-



tion, my weight is just a little bit back (ignore that my left leg is swung back so you can see the arrow clearly).

As a result of my weight being just a little bit back, you can see already that my natural balance point as I finish my turn is bringing my chest down and hips back behind me. And the question you have to ask yourself is if I start this way, how much worse will my body position get before I hit the ramp? **3**

If instead we use the principle of trying to get that first 6 to 8 inches of my inside edge on my right ski in the

water while I'm turning, my weight will instead be more on the ball of my right **4** foot.

From here, as I make my turn to the jump and get the front of the ski in the water to help me turn I will find that my hips stay up, my chest stays up, and when I finish my turn I am much more balanced and over my skis and in control of how I start to the ramp. **5-5b**

Another benefit of using the front of the ski to help you turn is in your wake crossing. If you use the front of the ski, you will orient the ski in a flatter more

balanced position as you approach the wakes. Many people have asked how I can fly the wakes like I do and yet land in a position where I am going full throttle as soon as I land. The secret is in the attitude of the ski when I hit the wakes. Imagine where my left hand is on the ski along with the white chalk mark is where the water is breaking on the ski as I finish my turn.

If I'm on my heels as I leave my turn and hit the wakes, then like most peo-

ple I will get jostled around and lose my footing. Instead I hit the wakes more level and balanced. I can be pushing on my right ski 100 percent and all that happens is I get pushed off the wake in a balanced position and return to the water in the same position, never having to adjust body position. **6-7**

I hope that as you read this article you will find comfort in the fact that there is no new secret to jumping a long way. The secret is in finding a way to think about the fundamentals of the sport and breaking them down in such a manner that you can achieve your goals easier, "a means to an end" if you will. So remember, the next time your coach or competitors tell you that you're on your heels in your turn, try using the 6 to 8 inches in front of your inside edge to help get you where you need to be.

**Freddy Krueger, who lives and trains in Winter Garden, Fla., is the current world record holder in Men's jumping. He is sponsored by MasterCraft Boats, D3 Skis, Body Glove Wetsuits, OJ Props, Masterline Ropes and DSO Sunglasses.**

