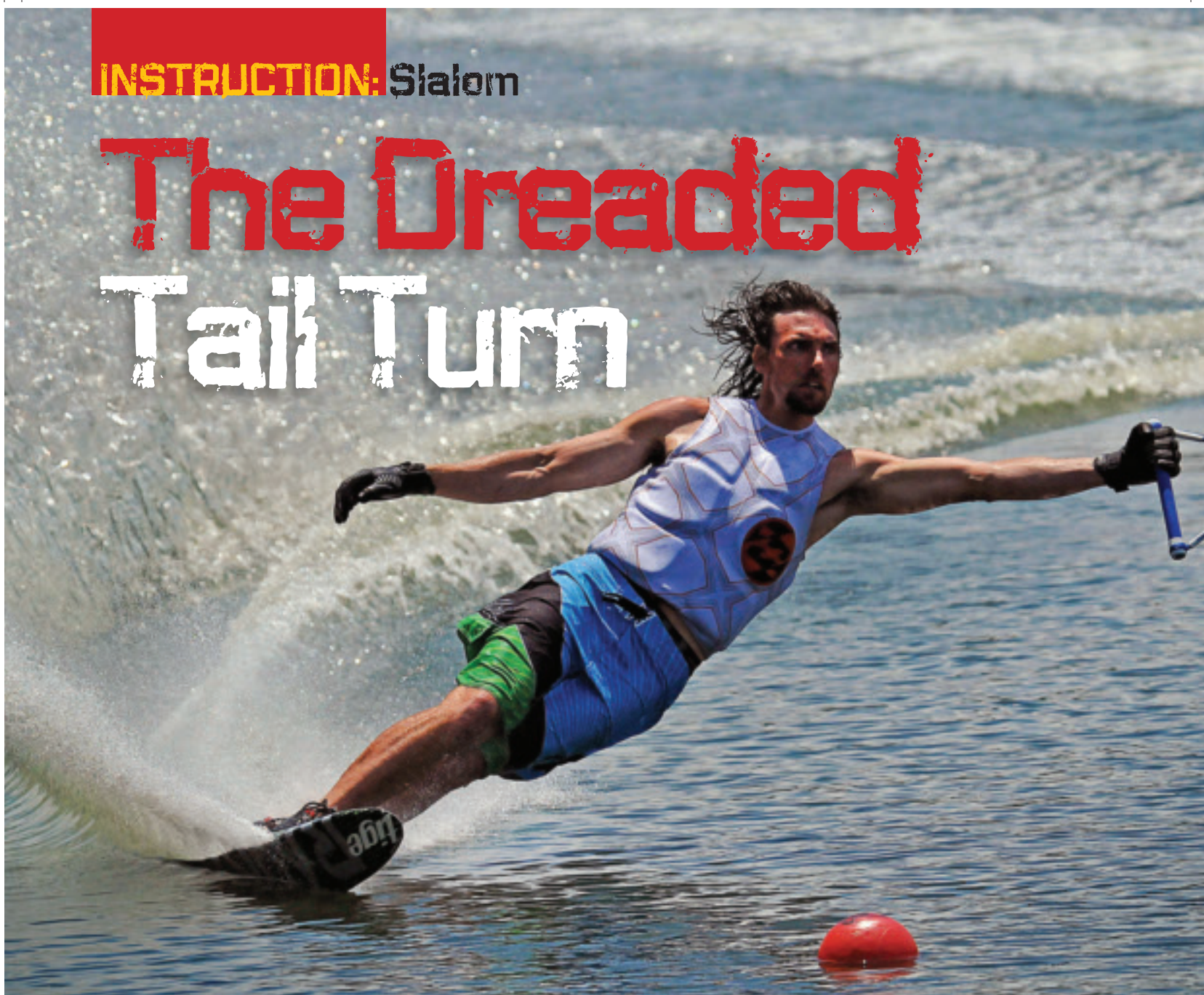


INSTRUCTION: Slalom

The Dreaded Tail Turn



Written by Chris Rossi

Photography by Marie Bolusset at Swiss Ski School

**The dreaded
tail turn is a skier's
worst enemy.**

To run our toughest passes, we need to start accelerating as close to the buoy as possible and be able to maintain our cross course direction through the second wake. This assures we will reach maximum speed through the wakes and into the pre turn. Since speed is defined as distance divided by time, if we can be traveling faster through the edge change, we will have the most space before the upcoming buoy with the same amount of pre turn time. The more space created, the more accurate the skier should be in completing a balanced turn. I define a balanced turn as one that we carry as much speed as possible into and

through all phases of the turn. When we finish the turn traveling faster, we have a higher potential top speed behind the boat. This is the game of short-line slalom skiing.

I have been reading a lot of forum posts lately regarding skiers' tail turning struggles. I would like to explain why a tail turn happens and how I think about making a better turn.

The dreaded tail turn is a skier's worst enemy. It often results in a slack hit from the boat and subsequent loss of direction into the next buoy. The most common reason for a tail turn is that the skier is traveling on a straighter line than desired into the buoy, then makes a poor



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arc we are on and choose to alter our trajectory by forcing the ski to over slide. Excessive slide causes rapid deceleration. While excessive slide does allow the ski to rotate and finish the turn with angle, the loss of speed means that the skier has slowed to a speed that is slower than the boat. The more speed the skier has lost, the bigger the hit from the boat.

When I come into a turn, I envision my skiing path as an arc. I see the upcoming buoy and I see the trajectory I am traveling. My optimal line brings me into the buoy very early with an early apex and finish near the buoy. The more I veer from this optimal trajectory, the more challenging it is to see and trust the correct line. After the edge change, I allow the boat to pull my body up and over center. Once my weight has passed the centerline of the ski, I am now on my turning edge. At this stage, I am just trying to allow my ski to continue on its outward-bound path while keeping the line taught. My body is being pulled more and more over the ski as I am trying to stay light and keep my speed. As the water break moves forward on the ski due to this slow weight shift forward, the ski starts to change direction. Since the tip of my ski has more of my weight on it, the tail is freed up and slides more outward than the tip. This is the drifting phase of a turn. Yes, there is some loss of speed in all slides, but it is much less than in a tail turn. This drifting rotation sets me up with enough ski rotation by the time I get to the apex that I can connect to the handle very close to the buoy without ever having to think "turn." It just happens without me thinking of it. This is the main reason that most accomplished skiers will say that the game is won and lost behind the boat, not in the turn! The problem with too straight of a line coming into the buoy is that this drifting cannot

decision on when and how aggressive to finish the turn, then overrides the ski by pushing more weight on their back foot. This weight shift takes the front of the ski out of the water, thus less edge is holding the ski on its current path. With less edge hold, it is easier to manually slide the tail around (old school upper body rotation). When riding on an arc, there is only one optimal line that keeps the rope tight. Choose to turn before you have reached your true apex, and you will turn into slack. Choose to turn after you have reached the apex and you will be pulled out the side and forward resulting in a fall. The former is the cause of most mistakes in slalom ski turns.

Errors occur when we don't trust the

occur because if it did, the skier would go inside of the buoy. Here are some keys to help with success:

- 1: Spend some time visualizing your path through the course. If you can't see it in your mind, you won't do it in real life.**
- 2: Make sure to carry speed while you are turning in for your gates. This will help you to create as much space coming into buoy 1 as possible.**
- 3: Maintain maximum direction through the second wake. This will cause the ski to release at the proper time with a good trajectory.**
- 4.) Stay connected to the handle. This does not mean you have to hold the handle in to your body, just make sure you feel like you are a weight at the end of the rope. This will pull you up on over the front of your ski allowing you to start the drifting phase of the turn.**
- 5: Keep shoulders level through all phases of the turn. This maximizes balance and will keep the tip of the ski engaged.**
- 6: Trust your line no matter how straight or late you feel. By giving up on your line, you will revert to the tail turn, and nothing good happens from this.**
- 7: Practice this first on your longer lines. You will have more confidence to apply this new way of skiing and will start to see the advantages very soon.**

Chris Rossi is sponsored by Radar Skis, Tige Boats, Performance Ski & Surf, Billabong and pumpRocker. Be sure to check out his new Web site – slalomguru.com – for more on this and many other slalom skiing topics.