

Skiing The Impossible Line

Written by **Chris Rossi**

Photography by **Scott N. Atkinson**

Photography editing by **Lynn Novakofski**

Your mind will race and tell you that you will never make the next buoy, but over time you will learn to stay calm and trust it.

It's the most common reason for missing passes and yet we continue to perform this mistake over and over, expecting a different result. What is it you ask? Attempting to ski the *impossible line*. Let's state the given first. That is that the boat will always be traveling down the course at its set speed. Yes, momentary deceleration due to skier load does occur, but it is so minute that we need not recognize it. So, with knowing that the boat will never slow down, what angle can you realistically ski coming out of the turn? The line you chose to see in your mind is the line you will attempt to ski while you are on the water. It's been long enough, now is the time to start seeing the ski-able line and not the impossible line.

If you chose to try to turn 90 degrees to the wake at the finish of the turn, you will be forced to give most of that angle back to the boat. This is why you have learned to "work hard behind the boat." The moment the rope comes tight and your ski has excessive angle, the rope applies a heavy load onto the skier. This load or force is an edge change force. Meaning the moment your body takes load, your ski starts to flatten. We know as skiers that if we don't oppose this force, we will never make it to the next buoy. So what do we do? Pull and fight to not lose all direction. If you think back to every pass you have missed and for the majority of us, every pass we have ever taken, we have skied with this feeling. Dumb. Only recently have I recognized this in my own skiing, so I'm the first to admit that I, too, have skied dumb for most of my life. Attempting to ski an impossible line and failing miserably. Starting today, let's begin to see the ski-able line.

The idea is to only ski with the maximum angle that does not put load on

the rope. This ski angle is so much less than you have ever skied with it will inevitably scare the living you know what out of you. Your mind will race and tell you that you will never make the next buoy, but over time you will learn to stay calm and trust it. I think of looking for the turn that leads me all the way to the second wake. At the apex, instead of worrying about turning your ski, think about finding a way to fall all the way to the second wake. Another way to think of this is to be one moment ahead of the rope. There is no pushing on your ski to turn and definitely no pulling in on the handle to turn. Only pure falling all the way to the second wake. This thought will trip you up at first. To that I say that you have always fallen back to turn your

ski. Actually, it's more correct to say that you have fallen back to skid or slide your ski around. This causes excessive loading of the rope and a very premature edge change. Look at this photo and imagine surfing like this all the way to the second wake before ever catching the boat's pull. This would be the perfect line. The closer you come to skiing this line, the more buoys you will run. Oh, and one more thing, because you are never loading the rope, your body will feel much better, too!

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

