

Does An S-Turn Still Make Sense?

Written by Freddy Krueger

Photography by Scott N. Atkinson

I recently did a dry-land clinic in Michigan and I was surprised by the number of questions about the S-Turn I do. When asked, some of those in attendance thought the S-turn should be larger, while others thought it should not be used at all. I believe the S-turn is still a vital part of jumping, but it can often be so subtle that it is hardly detected. Some jumpers do a very limited version of the S-Turn, while jumpers like myself and Scot Ellis actually still do an identifiable version, but still quite tame to that of years past.

The S-Turn used to be a much larger movement. You would try to get as wide as you could and get out in front of the boat, and then start a movement out away from the boat. Because of how far you could get out in front of the boat, the jumper would have to move out away from the boat a considerable distance to keep the rope tight. Then, you would turn from the widest point on the boat. This movement often meant that the jumper was starting at nearly a stand still, and often times coming out of a hole.

The S-Turn by nature has to be different today because of three major factors:

The cruise control does not have the ability to look over its shoulder and anticipate the jumper beginning his or her turn like a manual driver could. Because of this, the boat is actually getting behind when the jumper starts cutting, and to make up the difference starts gassing much more aggressively than a manual driver would.





The boats are much more powerful. When you combine the power of today's boats with the hard start from the cruise, it makes it very difficult to maintain your cut through the ramp when you start this hard.

The development and addition of the big skis means that the jumper needs a little more time to get the skis turned. But because of the extra surface area, there is no need to lose all of your speed and sink into a hole.

So an S-Turn, to me, starts much earlier than it used to. I start my movement out away from the boat actually before I pass the pylon because it will keep my line tight, but also control how wide I get on the boat. This can be extremely helpful when I am in a tailwind because I won't get so wide that I can't help but sink into a hole.

The most important aspect of the S-Turn is that the outward motion helps create a momentum that helps me get my skis turned. Imagine if you had to swing a golf club, but you could not use a back swing, you just had to start from the top of your swing! This is what most jumpers do when they come into their turn. They just stand there, and then when the time is right, they turn left. The next time you ride a bike or a motorcycle and you go to turn left, notice how you will first break right, just a little, and then you will lean into your

turn to the left. The faster you are traveling into your turn on that bike the more you will actually go right before you go left! Even on a three-quarter cut where you do not get wide enough to pass the pylon, you should still start your turn with an outward motion to help build your momentum through your turn.

The outward movement also squares you

Because I start the movement out early, I do not have to set an aggressive edge and consequently I can keep my speed up into and through my turn.

Many people do not realize that using your edges while you turn is what "bleeds" off your speed and consequently causes you to fight the boat all the way to the jump. Instead, if you can learn to use the

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up with your right ski, which is the ski you want to use to turn. With no outward motion you will be caught to the inside of your turn and you will start leaning before you finish your turn. This will cause you to push on your skis for support and the skis will not finish the turn like they would if you were standing over the top of them.

Notice in the pictures that I am not "breaking away" from the boat on an aggressive edge, but rather I am just "drifting" out away from the boat.

S-Turn early in your glide, you will feel more controlled into your turn, be on flatter skis through the turn, and keep more speed up as you finish your turn, all of which help with the bigger skis, stronger boats and cruise control.

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 Zero Off GPS Speed Control. Visit his Web site - thenightmare13.com



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