

Cold Water Recommendations

Written by Chris Rossi

Photography by Ellen Rossi

Cold water does not ski the same as warm water. It is a fact that skiers have to deal with. It is no coincidence that when the hot summer months arrive, so does the good skiing. Warm water allows the ski to cast out for the buoy better, giving us more space before each buoy. The earlier you come into the buoy, the more time you have to make a balanced turn. This leads to less falls and more buoys completed. As the water cools down, we start to lose that space before the buoy and see a drastic reduction in buoy count. Lets take a look at changes we can make to help keep some of those buoys we tend to lose. I have listed the suggested changes in the order that I change them.

Move the Fin Back: When distance from tail (DFT) is decreased, the tail of

0.003 inches for every 10 degrees of water temperature loss.

Make the Fin Deeper: Fin depth controls ski stability. The deeper your fin, the more weight it will support on the edge of the ski. As the water cools, your ski feels like it rides higher in the water. This makes it feel much less stable. Add depth to give your ski back some of its support/hold. Another benefit of added depth is added width. Because the ski is able to run a little flatter in the pre turn, it will keep its speed and direction better. My general rule of thumb is to run the deepest fin possible. If you get too deep, the ski will not roll up on high enough edge angle to keep the direction you set out of the turn and you will run straight at the next buoy. Try adding 0.002 inches of depth per 10 degrees of water temperature loss.

reduction for every 20-degree water change.

Reduce Length: When length is taken out of the fin, the ski carries out farther before initiating the turn. This helps gain a little space before the buoy. Also, less length will allow the ski to make tighter turns on both sides. I don't tend to change my length settings too often regardless of temperature or location, but in extreme temperature changes (88 to 63 degrees) a length reduction of 0.005 inches has helped.

For tips on how to measure fins, check out proskicoach.com/gear/fin_measurement/.

As far as what you can do on the water to help, I'll start by saying you should make sure to hold your edge all the way through the second wake. By holding direction through this area, the ski will carry out farther and roll up on a higher edge angle for you to turn on. Remember that you feel fast into a buoy when you have a poor line into it, not because you are actually going too fast. When you get the power triangle connected out of the buoy, focus on that connection and keep it all the way through the edge change. This ensures that you stay on the best line and helps you to keep your outward momentum. You will lose your glide speed quicker in the cold water so don't be afraid to be strong in this area. Also, just realizing that you cannot ski quite as early to the buoys as in the summer months will help. Just accept that you will be a few feet later to the buoy and adjust accordingly. Good luck and have fun experimenting.

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the ski slides out less in the pre turn. This helps to keep the ski out in front of the skier more. When the water cools down, the main thing I feel is that my ski wants to suck behind me much quicker after the edge change. This causes me to get too much of the ski in the water too early, taking away width and speed before the buoy. If I am too far forward coming into the ball, then I will have to rock back at the finish of the turn or I will blow the fin out and fall. By moving the fin back, more ski will be out in front of you in the pre turn, helping to set up the best turn possible. My general rule of thumb is to decrease DFT by

The above-mentioned changes are my most common cold water fixes. Dial in these first and then use the following suggestions if more change is necessary.

Bindings Back: By moving the bindings back, more ski can be kept out of water in the pre turn. This adds some space before the buoy and gives you more ski to finish the turn.

Less Wing: Wing pulls the tip of your ski in the water. By reducing wing angle, you will delay the initiation of the pre turn, thus adding necessary width. Try 1 degree

Chris Rossi is a professional slalom skier and coach who is sponsored by Radar Skis, Tige Boats and Performance Ski & Surf. For more discussion on this and many other water ski-related topics, visit proskicoach.com or come ski with Chris at SkiTek in Orlando, Fla.



ABOVE: Aaron Larkin navigates the cool waters of the Prince's Club on his way to a second-place finish.

RIGHT: Billy Susi throwing down at the Prince's Club.

BELOW: Legendary cold water skier Jamie Beauchesne laying down a turn at the Diablo Shores Pro Am.

