

Connection



Written by Chris Rossi • Photography by Marie Bolusset at Swiss Ski School

How many times do you have to bang your head against the wall before you decide it's not a great idea? Not too many, right? Time and time again we skiers do the same type of thing when we try to pull against the boat in the edging process. This philosophy of leaning as hard as we can in the opposite direction that the boat is traveling is totally insane. These days the top boats are made with 5.7-liter engines pumping out around 340 horsepower. Add to this GPS cruise control that is scary accurate, and we don't stand a chance at slowing the boat down for anything more than an instant. All that awaits on this path is a heavily overloaded rope at the edge change and a fast pre-turn that heads straight at the buoy with no line tension. Instead of fighting the boat, let's think of it as our tool to get from side-to-side. No need to struggle; accept the boat's direction and use it to accelerate or propel you over to the next turn. I can hear it in your thoughts right now, "Yeah, that's great and all but I have to make it over there somehow and this excessively leaned-away approach is all I know works." Again, it's time to start moving in a new direction.

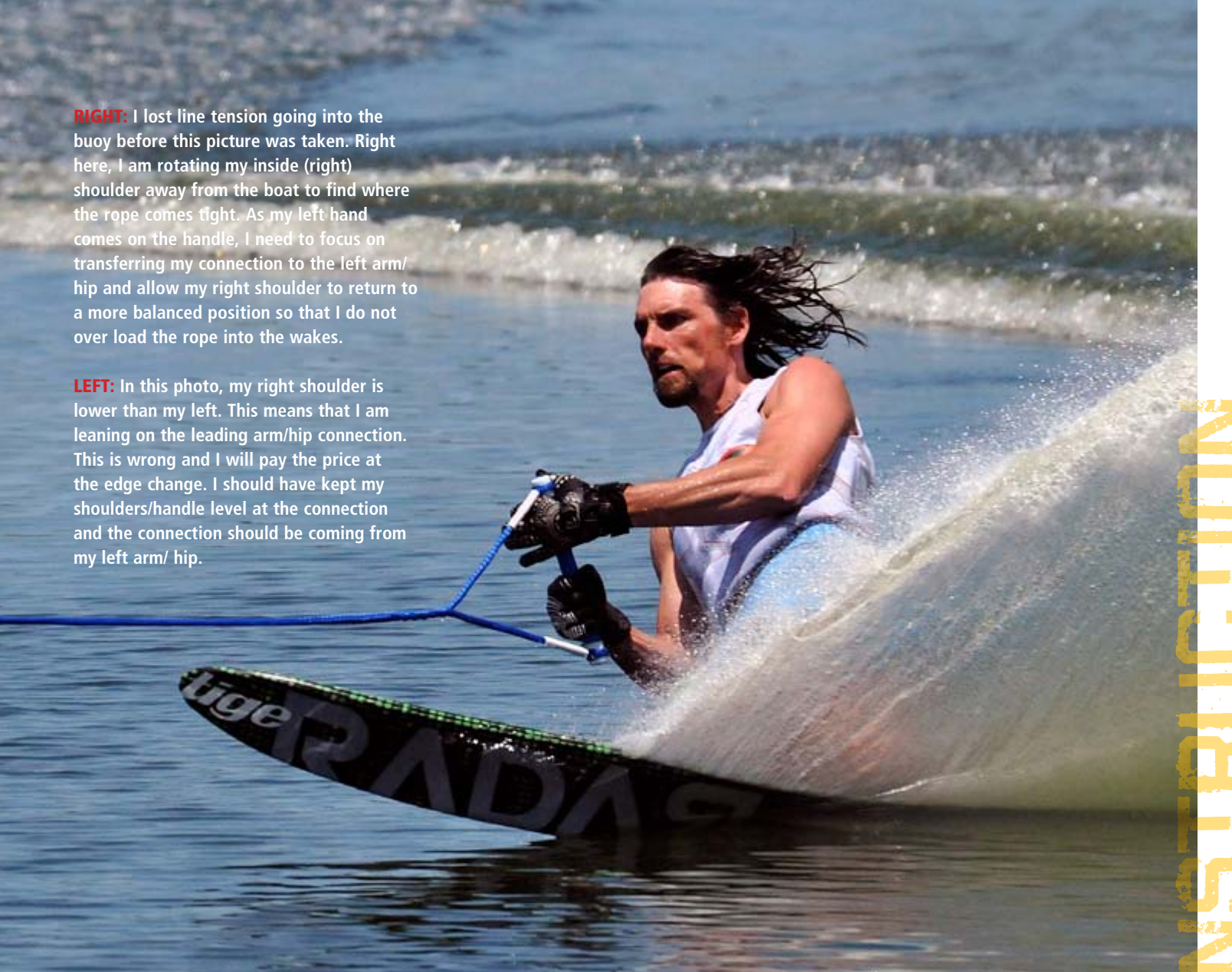
At the apex of your turn, the most amount of your ski will be engaged and the rope should be tight. We want to think about sliding or stepping behind the handle so that our outside hand slides onto the handle and is the connection we are going to trust all the way through the next turn.

This is called trusting your trailing arm and is 100 percent opposite of the way a lot of us grew up skiing like. Once you have established the trailing arm connection (outside arm to outside hip), think of the rope as fishing line (breaks easily), and just allow your body to be directly behind the

handle and go with it. The edge change should happen by the second wake so that when you land, your ski is on the inside edge and you are still connected through your trailing arm. Your goal now is to be the weight on the end of the pendulum and arc/ski with the handle. A major key to this working is the leading arm/hip connection must not be engaged (shifts connection to the wrong hip) as this will force you to go inside the optimal line and you will lose line tension. If your rope has any bow in the pre turn, the rope is not tight and thus you are not connected. You do not need to fear speed if you are connected to a tight rope. In an ideal world, two hands would remain on the handle to the buoy line. As the outside hand comes off and you ski away from the handle, do not lose line tension. This keeps you on the optimal line and makes sure your inside hip is leading and puts you in perfect position to slide or step

RIGHT: I lost line tension going into the buoy before this picture was taken. Right here, I am rotating my inside (right) shoulder away from the boat to find where the rope comes tight. As my left hand comes on the handle, I need to focus on transferring my connection to the left arm/hip and allow my right shoulder to return to a more balanced position so that I do not over load the rope into the wakes.

LEFT: In this photo, my right shoulder is lower than my left. This means that I am leaning on the leading arm/hip connection. This is wrong and I will pay the price at the edge change. I should have kept my shoulders/handle level at the connection and the connection should be coming from my left arm/hip.



back into the handle at the apex.

Challenge yourself to step outside your box and let go of what you think you know. Get the video camera out and watch yourself. Pay close attention to where your connection is coming from and make sure the edge change comes off the second wake and that you keep a tight line skiing out to the buoy. Ideally, you will be pulled though every moment of the course. You will not be looking to be free of the boat.

Here are a few thoughts I have to pass on:

- Your ski tip does not want to point 90 degrees away from the boat at the finish of the turn. In an ideal world, the tip of your ski starts to bite in the pre turn and causes the tail to wash out faster than the tip of the ski. The hope is that your ski has come around so that at apex the tip and tail

of the ski form a line that points just up course of the next buoy. Anything more and you will overload the rope and pay the consequences. You may need to re-evaluate how you set up your ski as well. Video is a useful tool for ski set up.

- Your inside shoulder can rotate back to find lost tension, but you still have to ski into the trailing arm and trust it. If you lose line tension in the turn, you can rotate your inside shoulder back (opposite direction the boat is traveling) to find where the line becomes tight, but still focus on skiing into the trailing arm and trusting the shift into that connection.
- Don't try to make up time if you

bobble. Do your best to get your connection through the trailing arm no matter what kind of turn you just made. There is plenty of space before the next buoy. Remember that we can't possibly pull the boat backward to make up for the lost space. Just focus on the connection and following the handle.

- Handle should be level from connection point all the way to the next buoy line. If one side of the handle is lower, that shoulder is lower and thus applying excessive line load. This is easy to identify when watching video.

Radar Skis, Tige Boats, Performance Ski & Surf and pumpRockr sponsor Chris Rossi. Follow Chris on Twitter @SlalomGuru and through his Web site, slalomguru.com.