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Training Tips from  
Canadian Pros

# It's all In Your Head: JUMPING SAFE, JUMPING FAR

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**YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A PROFESSIONAL WATER SKI JUMPER TO REALIZE THAT THERE ARE MANY INHERENT RISKS INVOLVED IN THE SPORT. THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS THAT CAN GO WRONG WHEN A HUMAN BODY IS BEING PULLED BY A 400-HORSEPOWER BOAT AT FULL THROTTLE WITH THE EVENTUAL GOAL BEING TO LAUNCH THAT BODY OFF OF A FIVE-FOOT HIGH, STEEPLY ANGLED RAMP. THE RISK IS MULTIPLIED BY THE FACT THAT SUCCESS IN THIS EVENT IS JUDGED ON JUST HOW FAR THE BODY TRAVELS.**

It's easy for anyone who has attempted the sport, or anyone wishing to attempt the sport, to get lost in how dangerous it is. The truth is; it is very dangerous. This is why it

causes such a euphoric rush for jumpers and such excitement for spectators.

The good news for parents, coaches and jumpers alike is that it is possible to jump safely. The even better news is that by jumping safely, you will actually jump further!

It may sound somewhat counter-intuitive to suggest that you can jump further by jumping safely. The motto "playing it safe" is normally reserved for situations where the goal is to do just enough to get by.

This isn't the case in water ski jumping. In fact, the vast majority of injuries in our sport occur when a jumper is "cutting like a maniac" or "laying it on the line" (you don't tend to jump very impressive distances when you're left gripping your aching knee because you cut so hard that you were no longer in control of your body). I've suffered a couple of injuries during my career and they both happened when I had this sort of a mentality. A good, safe jump should have the effortless feel that can only come from being in complete control of both your body and perhaps more importantly, your mind.

Earlier in my career, I believed that if I simply worked even harder in

the gym and on the water, I would automatically become a better jumper. I soon discovered that I wasn't getting the results I wanted in competition no matter how hard I worked on my body and my technique. In fact, no marked improvement occurred until I realized that if I told myself I was going to do well, I would do well. WHAT A FANTASTIC DISCOVERY!

I had complete control over my fate. It wasn't the day of the week, the humidity, or the alignment of the stars. It was me all along. I apply the same mentality to my safety on the water. I try never to forget that it is me and only me who controls both my safety and my performance.

In order to perform at your optimal level, it's important that you get to know how you work. We're all different and therefore we all have different ways of keeping ourselves motivated. However, one thing that every jumper should have before hitting the water is a purpose. What do I want to accomplish by making this jump? Your safety should always be number one on this list. How do I make sure I have a safe jump in the heat of competition?

I do it by getting back to basics, which includes: turning from wide on the boat with plenty of speed, making sure I'm balanced, being aligned and stacked while cutting and ensuring that I'm being progressive from my turn to the wakes.

After that, it's a matter of holding the angle I've created through the wakes and through the ramp. When I do these things, I always jump safely. When you feel confident that you can make the jump safely, you can begin to address your performance.

I like to use my victory at the London Night Jump as an example of how having a clearly defined purpose helped me to achieve my goal.

I knew that if I wanted to "go big" at the finals in London on a Saturday night in front of 8,000 frenzied fans, there were a lot of things I had to do to MAKE SURE this happened.

I started by writing down my goal of winning the event in my "Goals Book" about a month before taking off for London. During that month, my on-water training, nutrition, rest and daily goals were designed with

one purpose in mind, a victory in London.

When the night of the event finally came I felt extremely confident because I knew that I'd done everything I could have possibly done to prepare for the competition. I treated my set at the London Night Jump the same way I had treated my practice sets during daylight at home in Alberta. I didn't allow the magnitude of the environment to cause me to deviate from the basics that would both keep me safe and allow me jump far. I delivered three solid, safe jumps that evening in London. I won the event and nearly set a new night jump record!

My experience at the London Night Jump further solidified my belief in the power of the mind. It also served as a reminder that goal setting should play a major role in any good training program. Having clearly defined goals will help you to stay motivated and will also make jumping a lot more fun. With each goal that you achieve you will develop more confidence, which combined with hard work on the water, will make you a better jumper. However, always remember the most important goal of all; STAYING SAFE!

I've really enjoyed writing this article for WakeSports Canada Magazine and I hope that I was able to answer some of the readers' questions about both safety and performance. If anyone has any further questions about any water skiing related issues, visit my website at [www.ryandodd.com](http://www.ryandodd.com) and I will be more than happy to answer your questions.



# Important Fundamentals of Water Ski Jumping

**Stay Balanced:** Make sure that you are centered and feeling comfortable when gliding, turning, counter-cutting, digging into the ramp and kicking.

**Find Your Powerful Position:** Your most powerful position is always the position that feels the most comfortable. Everyone's powerful position will look a bit different. Why? Because our bodies are all created differently and we therefore have different strengths and weaknesses. Some people are dominant on their left and some are dominant on their right. Some people develop a counter-cut easily, but look a bit silly cutting to the ramp. This is nothing to worry about. It just means that you'll have to work a bit harder at your cut to the ramp.

**Point Yourself in The Right Direction When Cutting to the Ramp:**

Be sure that every part of your body is pointed in the direction that you want to travel. This means having your head, shoulders, chest, hips and skis pointing to where you are aiming and moving as a whole.

**What to do if you're Late for the Ramp:** If you'd still like to hit the center of the ramp despite being a bit late, you will have to create and hold a greater angle from your turn. This will involve greater pressure being placed on your body than if you were a bit earlier, as well as taking less angle to the ramp. However, by using effective biomechanics, (all body parts pointing towards the direction you want to travel) you should be able to hold everything through the ramp and still have a good jump.

**What to do if you're Early for the Ramp:** The same biomechanical principles apply for a narrow, early cut except that there is much less pressure on your body. You'll require a slower turn and an easier start while making sure that you are late enough after the wakes to have your maximum angle into and through the ramp. In order to do this: keep your head

up, your chest up, your arms straight, and pressure on the balls of your feet. The less you deviate from this position of perfect alignment, the more speed, control, and power you'll create. You'll also get a much better kick off of the ramp.

Narrow, wide, late or early, it's possible to salvage even the worst of set-ups by making simple adjustments in your glide. This will help you to stay on target and avoid missing jumps.