

Water Ski Judging Guidelines - Rope Handling



Introduction

Ropes are a key feature in water skiing and as such handling of them is a big part of judging. Here are some guidelines for handling them.

Ropes and the Boat Propeller

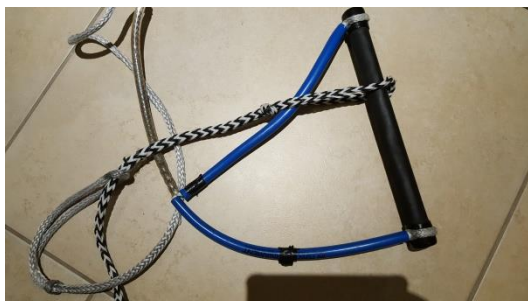
Ropes are a big enemy of the boat propeller. It is very important that they do not come into contact as the rope will get wrapped around the propeller and can damage the boat, the rope and also cause a big delay in a competition. As a boat judge, be mindful of where the rope is in the water, especially at the jetty and after a skier has fallen.

Transferring ropes and handles

Often for slalom and jump, the rope and handle can be changed for every skier. It is important for the efficient running of a competition to get a good system going between the boat judge and the jetty marshal/rope handler. If at the jetty, it is preferred that the rope and shock tube, are passed between the shore and the boat and vice-versa. The end of the rope or if for slalom, the end of the rope wrapped around the shock tube a few times, should be passed. If passing from shore to boat, note that the handle end will remain on the jetty for the skier. In some cases it may not be possible for the rope/handle to be passed, in this case it may be necessary to throw the rope and/or handle: The best way to throw a rope is to collect a few loops of the rope together with the handle and throw these. Care should be taken not to throw directly at a person as a ski handle can hurt if it hits someone on the head!

Attaching a handle to a rope

“Rope through handle, Handle through rope” – Learn this:



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Attaching a rope to the pole

For slalom, there may be two ways that a rope is attached to the pole, either directly onto the pole or onto a carabiner which is already attached to the pole with a 50cm piece of rope. Whichever method is used, the way of attaching the rope is the same. When shortening, the connecting knot between the 2 shortenings should be loosened and then only the loop for the current shortening attached. See picture below:

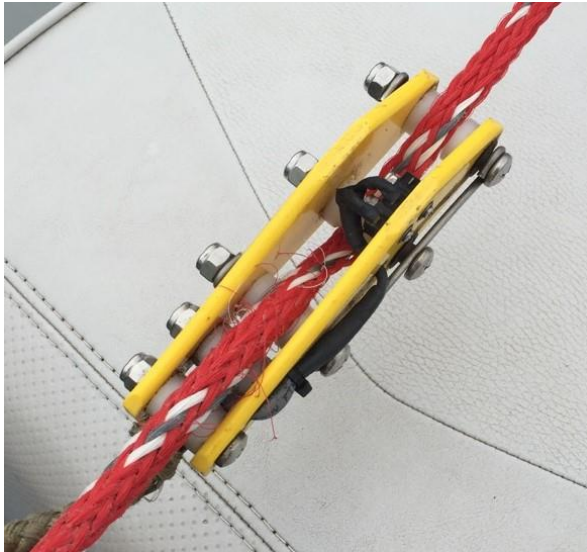


If attaching the end of the rope to the pole (slalom and jump), there are 2 ways this may be done:

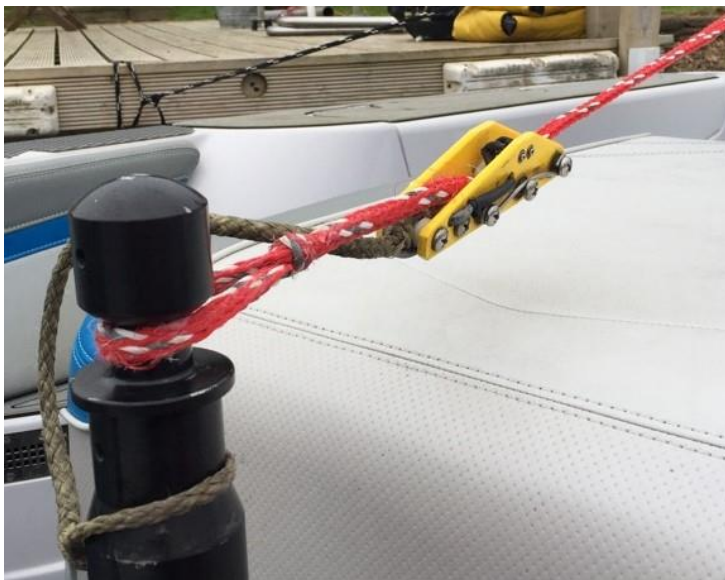
1. Place the loop at the end of the rope directly on the pole. This should only be done if the loop is not much bigger than the size of the pole.
2. Pull the rope through the loop and place the loop created by this on the pole. Care then needs to be taken to ensure that the knot in the rope is pulled through the loop, so that it doesn't hinder the movement of the rope on the pole.

For jump, the rope has to be fed through the switch before being attached to the pole. The flat edge of the switch should be facing downwards, then the rope is fed down through the end of the switch, underneath where the electrical wires are attached, and then up through the next gap. (The rope should not be touching the electrical wires).

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The loop at the end of the rope can then be attached to the pole. The switch should then be slid along the rope into position. Care should be taken to ensure that there is some slack in the piece of rope/string that attaches the switch to the electrical connection.



Good note of advice: If in doubt ask the driver!

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Being aware of switch ropes

As mentioned above, some slalom ropes are attached to the pole, with a 50cm “switch” section with a carabiner on the end, (so called because there used to be a switch connected to the speed control system for slalom). If “switch” ropes are used, they must be 50cm shorter than the standard ropes attached directly to the pole, otherwise the skiers will be getting 50cm too much rope!!



Ensuring the rope to be used is a correct homologated one

Slalom Ropes, Jump Ropes and Handles for competitions are measured to ensure that they are within given tolerances. The Chief Judge and/or Homologator (if there is one), will know which ropes have been checked. Care should be taken to use these ropes and handles only. The Homologator usually places some tape on the official ropes and handles for identification.

Shock Tubes

Shock tubes for slalom are **mandatory**. This is for the safety of the boat crew. The rope is fed through the shock tube before being attached to the pole. If a skier puts a lot of tension on the line and then releases the handle, the handle will be catapulted at the boat. The shock tube helps to prevent the rope from going round the driver or judge’s head/neck. They are also a requirement in the rules, so it is important to use one at all times for slalom. If one is not used, the crew are at a greater risk of being hurt and also, any scores achieved may be disallowed.

Care should be taken that the loop attached to the shock tube is also placed over the pole to prevent it sliding down the rope.

