

**Welcome to Tournament Waterskiing**

If you, or your child, is interested in Waterskiing, either recreationally or competitively, then have a quick read of our Introduction to Waterskiing. It’s designed to answer some basic questions, and give some insight into how the sport, and competitions, work on a day to day basis.

**The Sport**

There are three disciplines – Slalom, Trick and Jump. Each discipline requires its own unique set of equipment (skis and ropes/handles). You will probably be most familiar with Slalom skiing as that’s the most popular and well known of the three.

To begin with everyone starts on two skis, becoming proficient at getting out of the water, crossing the wakes, and after lots of practice eventually dropping one ski and ‘mono skiing’. After that skiers start to work on ‘running the course’ – a series of 6 buoys and two gates, entry and exit. Beginning at slow speeds the skier trains to ‘run the course’ by entering through the gates, skiing around each buoy, and exiting through the gates. Over time, the speed of the boat increases, and the length of the rope being used decreases.

Trick skiing is the most acrobatic of the three disciples. The ski is a small, ovalish shape with no fins. Skiers perform a variety of tricks, either holding the ski handle, or by inserting their foot in a special ‘toe hold’ handle and tricking on one foot. Basic tricks include moving the ski to a 90 degree angle, and turning the ski backwards. Trick skiing is a huge amount of fun, but equally it takes a lot of hours on the water to master new tricks.

Jump skiing is available to anyone age 12 or older. The ramp is set at 5ft for the youngest, moving up to 6ft for experienced jumpers. When learning to jump skiers ‘ride the skis’ for a good period of time so that they learn how to control the skis as this is key to safe landing. Equipment includes a crash helmet for, perhaps, obvious reasons!

**Competitions**

There are two types – European Ranking, and League. League competitions are local to the ski lake and are generally run for fun. Ranking competitions means that the results are used to create a European ranking by age category. There is no reason not to start with Ranking competitions, and organisers will do everything possible to make the experience fun for the younger skiers.

Each competition is posted on the BWSW website (<https://www.bwsw.org.uk/events-and-results/>). Parents need to review the website and in conversations with the coach choose which competitions to enter. The forms need to be returned to the club, with the entry fees. Normally there are several ‘rounds’ of skiing so if the first ski doesn’t go well, there is another chance to post a good score.

For young skiers there is the novice category, where skiers are awarded points for each buoy skied around. This is great for young skiers as it means they can enter competitions without having to ‘run the course’ perfectly the first time.

Children are put into age categories U10, U12, U14, U17 and are typically scheduled so that the youngest ski first. Most competitions start at 8am so its early mornings for the young ones.

To run a competition the ski course has to be checked to ensure that it is set out correctly (homologated) and several drivers and a whole array of judges need to be present to watch each skier and verify the scores. A minimum of three judges are in a ‘judges’ tower’, with one ‘boat judge’ as well. In addition there is a ‘Scorer’ who in in charge of making sure that all the points add up correctly. For trick skiing competitors are also given their ‘sheets’ showing how each trick was scored, or not!

The jetty is controlled by one or two ‘marshals’ who will call out the skier’s name, start speed and boat setting. They will also measure the skiers handle to ensure it complies with regulations. All lakes will have approved handles that any skier can use if they don’t have their own.

**Competition Scoring**

In a slalom competition, you select the speed at which you want to try running the course. If successful, the boat speed is increased by 3 kph for the next ‘pass’ and so on until it reaches the maximum speed for the age category of the skier. At that point, the rope is shortened for each subsequent pass. A skier continues to ski until s/he fails to run the course. The score is then the number of buoys successfully rounded combined with the boat speed or line length.

In a trick competition you will have created, along with your coach, two ‘trick runs’ consisting of a series of tricks that you will attempt to complete during a 20-second run behind the boat. The two runs will include different tricks, each of which has an internationally recognised score. The judges will decide whether each trick has been completed successfully and score it accordingly. A majority of the judges have to score a trick for it to count. This is the most frustrating of the three disciplines for skiers from a scoring point of view.

Jump scoring is simple. As long as you land the jump, keep hold of the rope and ski away, your score will be the distance covered. No points for elegance (or lack of it), distance is all.

**Competition Etiquette**

Arrive early and familiarise yourself with the lake – it’s a good idea to book a practice set the day before, or a few days before if it’s convenient. Each lake is different and the water can have a very different ‘feel’ to it, and the run up can be long, short, or include skiing around a small island. As a parent remember – your child is unlikely to ski as well in a competition as they do at the home lake during practice.

The running order for each competition will be published on line (<http://www.iwwfed-ea.org/classic/competitions/2018>) and a print-out will be posted on site. Check it the day/night before to make sure it hasn’t changed. Waterskiing is weather dependent and last minute changes happen all the time. This is especially the case when Jump skiing is taking place as wind conditions will dictate when it’s safe to jump. Be prepared for change. Take a note of the organisers phone number on the competition details found on the British Water Ski & Wakeboard web site (<https://www.bwsw.org.uk/events-and-results/>) so that you can be in touch if needed. Aim to arrive at the lake a minimum of 45 minutes before your child is scheduled to ski.

Find the club owners when you arrive and introduce yourself. Don’t expect a long conversation as they will be frantically running around getting things ready. There will be lots of people standing around, but no official ‘greeter’ so do introduce yourself and your child. People will be friendly, or a bit distracted as they are thinking about the competition. Some skiers will be skiing for a national team place so the pressure will be on.

It is your responsibility to get yourself, or your child, to the dock on time, changed, warmed up, and in vest and gloves. Plan to be ready and on the jetty three skiers before your turn. On the jetty wish the other competitors well, but keep the noise to a minimum. Skiers are trying to concentrate and prepare. Some skiers are chatty before they ski, some very focused. Respect each choice and behave accordingly. Don’t let your child run around or ‘play’ on the jetty. It’s a preparation space and you will be asked to quiet down if you’re not respectful of that.

The Jetty Marshal will ask you what speed you want for your /your child’s first pass of the course and what boat setting you want – don’t worry, you’ll learn about boat setting s before you start competing. It is worth asking the Jetty Marshal whether skiers are being dropped after each pass, or whether they are spinning (going around and coming back for the next pass without stopping) at one or other end.

Most lakes will have tea/coffee/cakes and simple food like sandwiches and wraps on sale. Many people will drive to the local supermarket to grab a sandwich or salad. Over the weekend people either camp on site, or stay at the local Travel Lodge or Premier Inn. Due to the frequency of running order change competitors are expected to be on site whether they are scheduled to ski or not. If you leave because you think you aren’t skiing, and the running order changes, nobody will phone you to tell you. You need to be logging on and checking regularly if you leave – if change happens with little notice and you are too far away to make it back in time, the competition will continue without you. There is a reason why the Tournament Rules require skiers to stay on site, so leaving is your risk to take. Do download, and read the rules. There are three Rulebooks. The World Rules , The Europe & Africa Additional Rules and the British Additional Rules. They can all be found on the dedicated Tournament Waterskiing website [www.tournamentwaterskiing.org.uk](http://www.tournamentwaterskiing.org.uk).

Some competitions will be one day Slalom competitions, others will be a combination of two or three events. Any competition with Jump will be more subject to change, as the wind speed and direction dictates when it is safe to jump. Safety is, naturally, the first consideration.

Parents need to be involved, nobody will come to get you or your child to ski. So listen, watch and be aware of when you are due down at the jetty. If in doubt – ask. Don’t wait around wondering or worrying, people will be happy to help and answer your questions but you do need to be proactive. You will see parents and skiers putting out garden chairs to sit on, bring some, and join in. A simple ‘Hi, I’m ABC or ABC’s Mum/Dad may we join you?’ is all that’s needed. Everyone will be welcoming, but everyone is distracted and thinking about the competition as well.

Things go wrong at competitions. Boats and cameras are finicky things and there will be delays as things are tinkered with. Breathe deep and remember that everyone wants the competition to run smoothly and is working towards that.

The weather is a big part of any competition. The wind will blow up, calm down, rain will arrive and dissipate. The skiers ski in the order of the competition – some days the weather will benefit your child, some days they will be the ones skiing in a downpour. It’s okay to express frustration, but an attitude of ‘that’s the way the cookie crumbles’ will be better for you, and your child. Your child will get the good weather at some stage. Skiing may be halted if the rain is too heavy for the driver to see properly, or the wind is too high for safe skiing.

Skiers can get reruns if there is a distraction on the course – birds of some sort typically or if the driver makes an error and take the skier out at the wrong speed. This happens in competitions – drivers are in the boat for hours on end doing a continuous cycle of start speed, boat setting, skier so it’s only to be expected that mistakes will happen. Your child will be offered a re-run if something goes wrong.

Do teach your child to ‘protest’ if a bird gets in their way during a run. The skier raises their ski in the air to indicate that they want to protest. A judgement will be made if a rerun is justified. If the answer is ‘no’ rerun do not argue with the judges as their decision will be based on video review so they really do have a better chance of understanding what happened than either you, or your child.

If your child falls during their ski then they will either be required to swim to the side, or they will be picked up by a rescue boat. Check with the Jetty Marshall about what the protocol is before they ski and make sure they understand what to do. Rescue boats wait and pick up several skiers before returning to the Jetty.

There will also be a first aider at the competition to assess any injuries that happen during the competition.

For Trick skiing the master sheets that show each trick and how it was scored are available for review for 30 minutes. The judges will often comment on why they didn’t score a trick. Do check these sheets – they will show what needs to be done to score the trick. It’s a good idea to understand the points, and how they are awarded so that if a mistake is made you can ask for a correction. Some tricks have to be done in a certain order to score, make sure you understand which ones.

The only competition that has entry requirements is The Nationals – check the rules to see what the levels are.

Finally, before you leave, do say goodbye to the organisers.

**The Team**

Britain sends teams of skiers to both European and World Championships. Despite the weather we have a great international reputation and have produced some of the best skiers in the world, past and present.

To have a chance of making the team at 14 or 17 yrs old, skiers need to compete in 2 disciplines as a minimum. This is because the sport is a team sport, not individual and The Federation needs skiers that can gain points in more than one type of skiing. Four skiers are taken in each age group, with there being a mix of boys and girls. The top three scores from each discipline combine to create the team score, so it’s important to have multiple entrants into each discipline to maximize the team score. From 21 onwards specialists skiers can be selected as the team is larger, and wild card places are awarded.

**BWSW (British Waterski and Wakeboard)**

This is the governing body of the sport, with the head office in Chertsey. While there is a team of full time staff working at The Federation, most of the judges, boat drivers, homologators and people running the competitions are volunteers giving their time freely. Offer to help if you can, it’s always appreciated. Tournament Waterskiing is managed by the Tournament Committee, a sub committee of BWSW.