

Is the Super Fly High Necessary?

The super fly high, while a still somewhat new and helpful tool to those learning to ski in today's barefooting community, is it really a necessary or essential component of barefooting? Well, up until 2008, everyone was more than happy to chuck a rope around the good old high pole and ski all day long, and let's not forget those REALLY old school boys back in the day who were happy to just have something attaching them and the rope to the boat at all, even if that meant they were holding on to a rope (which - back then - possessed better use as a bungee cord), held only two feet off the water.

And while there has been some debate in the past over whether or not the fly high is something that should be pushed forward into tournaments as it is unfair to those who have set certain scores and records on just the high pole, well what about those old schools footers who had to make do with the low pole - did they complain about the tower being installed and put into tournaments, OR did they look at how it would benefit skiers in the long run, encourage more people to join our barefooting family and it was simply the world moving forward with technology?

However, in today's society, where we are still in that minority of athletes for Watersports (or at least that's the case for us kiwis here down-under) any tool that is going to help newcomers learn how to foot, even just by giving them that little extra up ward pull on those first crossings or one foots is good news in my books. And it doesn't stop with the basics, I've seen a fair few people now nailing that first toe up behind the boat, or make that ever-so-scary reverse front to back, and let's not forget the benefits that it brings to learning to invert jump! So let's stop for a second here and look at what the fly high's really doing for three-event skiing.

Slalom: whilst a lot of people are still a fan of being heavy on the water and getting a firm cut, there are those out there who are more opposed to being lighter on the water to cut through the wake and, especially for the little ones having to cross that big scary wake at that slower speed, a little extra lift isn't going to hurt.

Tricks: when learning those ominous surface turns, who doesn't want to feel a little lighter on their feet? Not to mention the falls that come with learning new tricks like turns, hurting that little bit less - especially when you're pushing on 50 like some!! Also, with the basics like toe-holds, one foot stand ups, and toe ups more upward pull is always welcome.

Jump: I've seen just about my whole family benefit from the fly high when learning to invert jump and even witnessed my 50 year old uncle re-learn, after a year of flying upside down. And in a sport like ours where spectators are always looking for those exciting, big "superman" jumps, the fly high is helping people achieve their goals in flying 18 meters and more, including two women who have learnt in the last year, an awesome achievement in itself!

So, whether or not I think the Super fly high is a necessary part of barefoot water skiing, let's look at skiers like Keith St. Onge - who stepped over that 10,000 point tricks barrier back before the fly high was brought to tournaments, and jumping gods like Brett New and Dave Small - managing to fly 26 and 27 meters, long before the fly high was even thought about. So no, the Super Fly High is not exactly what you would call essential or necessary to barefoot waterskiing, but whether or not it is a superb training and learning tool and simply the new best thing to a tower or high pole? Absolutely - and who knows, one day it may become just as common as throwing on the boom for a training set, worldwide.