



**Q:** Dear Coach: I am out of shape but previously I was a national champion speed water skier! (Yes, it was quite some time ago). I love the water and the adrenalin and I'd like to participate in the sport again. It is approaching May and I'd like to be in the water by mid-September. Where do I begin and what do you recommend? - "Speedie".

**A:** Dear "Speedie": Speed water-skiing is a phenomenal sport requiring fantastic proprioception, balance, core stability and strength. It requires strength and stamina of the lower extremity for long isometric hold contractions, such as maintaining that partial squat split-stance during fast-paced water-skiing. Endurance for the arms, and grip strength is important, also, to maintain the hold on the straps.

First things first: you say that you are out-of-shape! Begin working on a total body workout with cross training for building your general strength and overall fitness. Weight loss may be a part of this goal.

To kick-start this program, a fairly intense training regime has to be developed in order to get you relatively fit for competition. As this is your first season to return in a long time, you may have to be flexible with your goals and accept that the development of general sport-specific fitness will be your main measure of success. Subsequent seasons, with continued training, will bring more and more success in terms of competition and ranking.

1. Early May to July: Develop Fitness Base:

This is an important phase to help you find a measure of fitness again! Your program will involve cross-training, cardiovascular endurance and interval training, and strength training. Achieving muscular balance will be critical to help deter injuries. Common injuries for water skiers include injuries to the knee. Injuries to the low to mid-back are prevalent, also.

Conduct basic fitness screening with a trainer to help determine baseline levels of weight, body composition, cardiovascular endurance, heart and respiratory rate, muscular strength and endurance, balance, and flexibility.

Perform exercises to build a foundation from which to specify training over time. Some sample exercises are described below. Closed-chain exercises have been selected to assure stability and safety early in the training and to mimic the feet "fixed" to the surface of the ski in the sport. I would begin with a combination of muscular endurance and strength training, which you vary by repetitions, rest breaks, number of sets, and weight loads. Perform 2 - 3 sets, high repetitions (12 - 20), relatively light load to tolerate repetitions, with short rest breaks (up to 30sec) for endurance; and mix with lower repetition and progressively higher load as the program continues to build strength.

Exercises: cardiovascular training 3 - 4 x per week (spin cycling classes, circuit rowing machines, or treadmill training for example); strength training at least 2 - 3 x per week with lunges, squats, fit-ball wall squats with alternate heel raises, calf raises, hamstring bridges with alternate leg lifts, lat pull downs, triceps dips, assisted chin-up and dips, supported seated circuit machine rows, abdominal and back core muscular training - plank holds, side planks, and other plank variations, sit-ups curls and crunches, alternate ankle reaches, v-ups, and similar.



A sound nutritional plan, also, will help you develop your lean muscle mass, mobilize fats, and develop the ideal body composition and weight that you desire for the sport.

2. Early July to mid-September: Pre-Season Progressive Training:

Here we graduate to increasing specificity with sports training. We can break this into micro-cycles to help with the gradual return to your sport-fitness.

Fitness testing will include comparative testing with your off-season performance - that is, do the same tests with which you began and contrast the results! Then add testing for speed & agility and plyometric ability with shuttle runs, vertical jumps, T-test, line drills, and similar.

Exercises include multi-joint and single joint action, and a mix of closed and open chain exercise, as tolerated. Plyometrics are introduced and the intensity of work increases while the volume of workouts gradually decreases.

Microcycle I: Early July to early August:

Develop core stability during balance. Use a swiss ball to begin kneeling balance work, learning to kneel gradually without support on your knees. Start with wall and trainer support and a slightly deflated ball and graduate to no support, firm and well-inflated ball. Increase time of balance. Standing balance work can occur on a bosu ball (half-inflated ball) to incorporate standing squats with weight resistance and balance. Standing on a bosu ball, toss a medicine ball to your trainer. Use the Fit Ball for bridging (lying supine, feet on ball, lift your hips) and graduate by alternate leg lifts during bridge to develop hamstring strength. Continue strength training with increased strength and progressively fewer reps. Evolve one-legged squats for a smith-kline machine support to no guided support, free-standing, while holding weights. Vary this with single leg lunge with the opposite leg supported on a bench to develop unilateral strength. Aim to develop the weaker leg, if you notice one weaker than the other. You can augment leg work with open-chain strength circuits if you wish, as long as you are able to do this without joint strain - quad raises, hamstring curls, leg abductor and adductor circuit training, and similar.

Add low-intensity plyometrics (explosive drills) such as: dot drills (jumps), ladder side jumps, side hops, high-knee skips, and similar. Make sure you have adequate rest days - 2 to 3 days break - between plyometric training days.

Microcycle II: Mid August to early September:

Continue core stability and balance by advancing the moves. Begin trying to stand on a Fit Ball, graduated with support to begin. Incorporate trampoline training if you have this available. Use one-legged standing bosu ball work with ball tosses, single leg squats with weights, and similar. Strength and cardiovascular training continues, again with more intensity but less volume or repetition. Plyometrics can advance in intensity with: box jumps, box jumps with weight, depth jumps, double box jumps, single leg hops vertical and lateral, explosive lunges, and speed and agility ladder work or grapevine feet, and similar. Finish plyometric drills with intensity interval



cardiovascular training. Work with ball squats and lunges to develop isometric endurance for the bent-knee position - time the practice to mimic the time a posture is held during the sport.

Your out-of-water workouts will progressively decrease as your in-water sport-specific training increases. Get in the water and get the practice going!

### 3. Mid-September onward: In-Season Training

Our goal is to maintain pre-season fitness, incorporate adequate rest, and keep in optimum form for competition. Resistance training frequency reduces to 1 - 2 x per week as does cardiovascular training. Ensure adequate rest before and after race-day.

### 4. Post-Season Training:

This is a fun period for many athletes. You want to maintain overall fitness but your training can be less specific. Try a new sport that you haven't tried before. Snow skiing and snow boarding is a great sport to use similar muscle groups but in on different terrain, where competition does not matter - you can play for the fun of it. Continue some treadmill training, yoga, and Pilates. Basketball can help build endurance and power spring in the legs. Have fun!

Between each training phase, you will want to taper and rest more at least a week before the next phase. Next year's cycle will include a longer training period during off-season and pre-season with progressive micro-cycles - we've had to squeeze in the training to fit your timeline this year! Good luck!

*~ Coach Tim, sports trainer, and Sara Pazell, strength & conditioning coach - Paradise Training trainers.*