



The Swedish Waterski & Wakeboard Federation (SWWF) is the national governing body of organized water skiing in Sweden. SWWF is a member of the International Waterski & Wakeboard Federation, IWWF and IWWF E&A. IWWF is the world governing body of organized waterskiing and IWWF E&A is the Europe & Africa region directly under the control of IWWF.

SWWF is an official member of The Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF) which in turn is the umbrella organization of the entire Swedish sports movement. Through its member organizations, it has three million members in 22,000 sports clubs. The Confederation was formed in 1903 and its present chairman, since 2005, is Karin Mattsson Weijber.

From the beginning SWWF has had a dual mission of promoting the growth and development of recreational water skiing and organizing and governing the sport of competitive water skiing in Sweden. SWWF has recently moved its headquarter to Strömsnäsbruk and has two part-time employees. The staff serves approximately 4,000 members in 70 ski clubs across the country and most members are, in one way or another, involved in tournament related activities each year. The clubs provide the local arenas where most of all development of SWWF takes place.

The Swedish waterski clubs are organizers of nearly all water ski, wakeboard, barefoot and disabled competitions in the country. SWWF maintains performance and national records for competitive skiers and keep detailed records of all judges, drivers and scorers who officiate at sanctioned tournaments.

SWWFs communications program includes publication of articles, information and educational material on the official webpage, [www.vattenskidor.org](http://www.vattenskidor.org)

Interest in competitive water skiing including all disciplines has grown considerably over the years in Sweden and continues to attract many more enthusiasts. The local ski clubs affiliated with SWWF organizes multiple tournaments each season. These range from small, local events for novices to national level tournaments for more experienced competitors. Male and female skiers of all ages can compete in traditional three-event water skiing (slalom, tricks, jumping) tournaments, as well as in tournaments for wakeboarding, barefooting and disabled water skiing. Cable wakeboarding is also a fast growing discipline and Sweden currently has two cable parks operating.

As a member of the International Waterski & Wakeboard Federation, SWWF select teams that compete in several world-level tournaments, notably the Open, Senior, Under 21 and Junior Water Ski World Championships. Naturally, SWWF also select teams to compete at the wakeboard, barefoot and disabled World Championships.

### **Water Ski History**

Ralph Samuelson was the first to attempt water skiing in June of 1922. The eighteen-year-old from Minnesota, USA thought that if you could ski on snow, then you could also ski on water. Ralph and his brother Ben experimented with the idea for a few days until in early July, Ralph stood up on two skis while being pulled by his brother. As for equipment, Ralph used a variety of materials including; barrel staves, snow skis and eventually formed water skis from lengths of wood. The ski rope was made from a long window sash and the skis were held on with leather strips.

Ralph Samuelson never patented the water ski, so in 1925 Fred Waller became the first to patent a water ski called Dolphin AquaSkees.

Water Skiing became primarily an exhibition sport, both in North America and Europe in the 1920s and early 1930s. It was not until the 1940's that the sport became competitive.

The Swedish Water Ski & Wakeboard Federation has been in the business of serving water skiers and in recent years wake boarders for exactly 50 years. SWWF celebrates its fiftieth birthday this year. The World Water Ski Union (now the International Water Ski & Wakeboard Federation) was founded in 1946. One of the very first water ski championships was the European Tournament Championship in 1947 and was followed by a World Championship in 1949. The sport was demonstrated at the Olympics in 1972 but has yet to be recognized as an Olympic sport.

### **Wakeboard History**

Wakeboarding has been one of the biggest sports-related phenomena during the past fifteen years. Once considered an obscure addition to the family of water sports it now is recognized as the fastest growing water sport in the world. In 2011, nearly 4 million people across the globe participated in this fast moving and awe-inspiring sport. Although it is easy to see why people are attracted to the spectacular moves of wakeboarding, it is not easy to identify the sport's birth. Perhaps the origins of wakeboarding will never exactly be known, but surfers deserve most of the credit because the beginnings of the new sport most likely began when surfers started being towed with a ski rope behind a boat.

A California, USA surfer named Tony Finn began the wakeboard revolution in 1985 when he developed the Skurfer — a cross between a water ski and a surfboard. Finn actively promoted his Skurfer, and was quite successful in raising people's level of awareness to the new sport. However, it took the design skills of Herb O'Brien to truly send the sport off into new heights. O'Brien, owner of H.O. Sports, a leading water ski manufacturer, took an interest in advancing the sport in the late 80s. Before long he changed the wakeboard industry by introducing the first wakeboard, the Hyperlite. This innovation led to a massive growth of the wakeboarding marketplace that continues to this day. The Hyperlite's natural buoyancy allowed easy deep-water starts, which in turn made wakeboarding accessible to virtually everyone.

One of today's biggest Swedish wakeboard stars is Caroline Djupsjö who won the 2010 European Open Wakeboard Championships and placed 5<sup>th</sup> at the 2011 World Wakeboard Championships in Milan, Italy.

### **Disabled Water Skiing**

Water skiing has been adapted so that physically disabled athletes can participate and compete. Tournaments offer slalom, tricks and jumping events for vision impaired individuals (blind or partially sighted), multiplegics (paraplegics and quadriplegics), leg amputees (above and below knee), arm amputees and athletes with both arm and leg disabilities. The skiers in the latter three categories compete with the same water ski equipment used by able-bodied athletes and have the option of using a prosthesis.

Vision impaired athletes do require special equipment. For example, they are guided by another skier in the jumping event, although they must be released before they go over the ramp and use audible signals instead of buoys in the slalom course.

Multiplegic athletes use a sit ski, which is larger than the ski of an able-bodied skier and includes a cage similar to that used in snow skiing.

A narrower slalom course than that set out for able-bodied competitors is an option for those whose disability is greater such as quadriplegics and athletes with both arm and leg disabilities.

One of Sweden's most successful disabled water skiers is Elsie Antonsen. Elsie won a bronze and a silver medal at the 2009 IWWF World Disabled Water Ski Championships in France.

### **The Competitive Events in 3-event skiing**

The three events of traditional water skiing are slalom, tricks and jumping. In slalom, the contestant negotiates a zigzag course of six buoys. The boat speed is increased three Km/h until a maximum speed for the division of competition is reached. Thereafter the rope is shortened in pre-measured lengths. The winner is the one who rounds the most buoys without a miss or fall. The best skiers do not miss until the rope is shorter than the distance from the boat to the buoy and the skier must try to round the buoy by leaning over it with his or her body.

In tricks, the contestant performs two, 20-second routines of tricks that each has an assigned point value. Some of the most difficult tricks include wake flips, and multiple turns performed with the towrope attached to the contestant's foot.

In jumping, the object is distance. There is a maximum boat speed for each age division but the very best male and female jumpers can double this speed by aggressively cutting into the jump ramp. Some male skiers in the Open Division jump more than 75 meters feet off a 180cm high jump ramp. Women competitors are jumping close to 60 meters feet using a 165cm high ramp. The current Swedish jump record is held by Daniel Efverström from Gävle Water Ski Club with a distance of 64,8 meter jump set in Polk City, Florida, USA in 2011.

One of our most famous past champion is 4-time World Waterski Slalom Champion, Helena Kjellander. Helena won this title 4 consecutive times - 1991, 1993, 1995 & 1997.

### **Barfoot waterskiing - History & Description**

Although barefoot slalom, tricks and jumping water ski events are very similar to traditional events, the major difference here is that the participants do not wear skis.

In the slalom event, an athlete earns points for crossing the boat wakes in a course that does not have buoys. In tricks, an athlete attempts to perform as many tricks as he can during two 15-second passes. Each trick has a pre-assigned point value and an athlete may perform each trick only once. The athlete who earns the most points wins the event. In the jumping event the ramp height is only 45 centimeters but the boat speed is more than 64 km/h.

Faster boat speeds (compared to traditional water skiing) are required for an athlete to plane on his two bare feet. Unknown fact - If a blister or cut opens on the bottom of an athlete's foot, standard procedure in the barefoot environment is to glue it shut to finish skiing and deal with the stitches later.

In addition to slalom, tricks and jumping, barefoot athletes also participate in figure eight competitions and endurance events where the athlete who stays up the longest is the winner.

Barefoot water skiing began in Florida, USA as a recreational activity in the late 1940s and was quickly introduced into the water ski shows at Cypress Gardens, Fla. The barefoot craze quickly spread, becoming especially popular among the Australians, who eventually organized the first barefoot tournaments. They were patterned after conventional competition, with an added discipline called "start methods," which has since been discontinued. Today, barefooting is a world-wide sport recognized by the International Water Ski & Wakeboard Federation. World Championships is held every two years in the month of August.

### Join us

Why not join our organization? Become a member and join one of our 70 clubs. We want you to have fun, be safe and excel in our sport. Maybe you want to start competing in our sanctioned events no matter your level. We have tournaments for all ages, all abilities. Confused? Have questions? Please contact SWWF at the below address and we'll be glad to help.

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Helsingborg 2011-01-25

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