

Calendar

Flat Water Club

Convair Bay Skiing

The ideal circumstances are on those days when you drive by Mission Bay and the water looks like a mirror," says Amy Rasdal, Convair Waterski Club member. "You want the water to be as flat and glassy as possible. You're skiing on top of the surface. If it's choppy, you feel that chop. So, typically, dawn is the calmest time of day. In the afternoon, the wind picks up and so does the chop. Also, having other boats around adds to the chop. So if you can get out there early and be the only one, that's the best."

Rasdal, although she is the club representative, is fairly new to waterskiing, having begun a year and a

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half ago, when she joined the 80-member organization. At the start, she took advantage

of the club's free instruction for beginners. "It's not a formal class, but plenty of members have skied for a long time and are willing to help. People helped me with every aspect of waterskiing and with wakeboarding. For wakeboarding, you use a wakeboard instead of skis. It's somewhat similar to snowboarding. So I've learned to ski, and I've also learned to drive a boat."

Rasdal, who does technology and general business consulting and lives near Mission Bay, has yet to try barefooting. "Usually, very advanced skiers do it, including some people in the club. You go 45 or 50 miles an hour, because you must go a lot faster to stay on top of the water than you do when you're on skis instead of just bare feet."

The club is a relic of sorts; it began as a perk for Convair Corporation employees. "It's been around for over 40 years. In the days when Convair started here and was trying to attract workers, particularly young engineers, it established attractive recreation programs." Waterskiing was one. "When Convair left San Diego, the club spun off as its own nonprofit organization. Some members are former Convair employees, but a lot of others are from the general public. We have every age — families with infants to teenagers; families with three generations of skiers. People actively ski anywhere from 5 to 75 years old," said Rasdal, who is 41.

The club owns four outboards — two MasterCrafts and two Hydrodynes. "Typically, to waterski, you have to own a boat or know someone who does. If you join the club, for \$120 annual dues the first year and \$100 subsequent



years, you can ski without owning a \$40,000 boat."

The club also lends skis and life vests. "I skied with club equipment for my first two months," says Rasdal. "Most people, if they decide they really like the sport and want to get into it, buy their own stuff — but you don't have to."

If you failed at waterskiing years ago, it's worth knowing that the equipment has improved. "The skis are made out of new materials, and their shapes are able to optimize your speed in the water. Also the bindings that hold your feet onto the skis are much more advanced."

Asked if there are injuries common to skiers, the way tennis elbow is common to tennis players, Rasdal says, "Lower-back fatigue is relatively common, but otherwise no, except those injuries that are related to falls." Having said that, she adds that the club is "very into safety. There are a lot of rules. Probably the most important one is, you can't be a boat driver without going through the club training program and being approved by the

board. Even if you've been driving a ski boat for years, you have to go through our training."

Why didn't a lifestyle develop around waterskiing the way it did around surfing? Rasdal, a snow skier and dancer but never a surfer, says, "I have some friends who both waterski and surf, and what they say is that in waterskiing, an experience is much more repeatable than it is in surfing, because there are fewer variables than there are in surfing — in terms of nature's input. Also, there's not so much the sense of going around to all the different places, as surfers do trying to find the best waves. Waterskiers just want to find flat water."

Still, the club ventures beyond Mission Bay. There are, for example, trips to the Colorado River about ten times a year.

Are waterskiers welcome everywhere? "No, there are some places where you can't ski — on certain lakes and reservoirs. There is only one reservoir in San Diego where you can waterski. That's San Vicente, out in Lakeside. And they limit the days you

can ski there, because the skiers share the water with the fishermen, who want it quiet and don't want skiers zipping through their fishing zone."

— Jeanne Schinto

Convair Waterski Club
Bay skiing
Sunday, March 30
(and most other Sundays)
8:00–11:00 a.m.
Meet at the south end
of Crown Point Park,
Mission Bay
members \$4 per 15-minute run;
nonmembers \$8
Slalom-course skiing
Sunday, April 6
(and one Sunday a month
throughout year)
Hidden Anchorage
on Fiesta Island, Mission Bay
2:00 p.m. until sunset
members \$5 per 15-minute run;
nonmembers, \$10.
1-800-699-2466; to leave
message, press # then club mail
box number 456-838-6754;
or check www.sdwaterski.org

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