# CATALAN WATER SKIING




Tradition, clubs and athletes
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**TEXT:** Lluís Noguera and Telma Cester. With more than 15 years of experience in the world of high-level water skiing, Lluís Noguera has been a world and European medalist in the under-21 category, Spanish champion on more than 10 occasions and current Spanish record holder in both the overall and tricks categories. Telma Cester has been active in high-level waterskating competition since 2016, with a record of 4 gold medals in the under-18 category, and two more gold medals in the Open category in different world championships. (IG: @telmacester)
**FOTO:** Lluís Noguera Collection.
From its beginnings on the Catalan coast to the present day, water skiing has combined family tradition, technique and passion for the sport. Clubs, athletes and fans have contributed to creating a consolidated space for the sport, with personal experiences that reflect how it is thriving in Catalonia.

## History of water skiing and *wakeboarding* in Catalonia

According to official sources, water skiing began in the United States in the early 20th century, but according to popular sources, its origin also comes from the French Mediterranean coast around very similar dates. In Catalonia, the origins date back to around the nineteen fifties, in parallel with the

development of coastal tourism. The first exhibitions took place on the Costa Brava, where the calm waters and the availability of marinas made it possible to introduce the sport.

Over time, the practice became maintstream with the creation of the first clubs and centres specialising in lakes and rivers with calm waters. The nineteen seventies and eighties marked a time of expansion, coinciding with the increase in recreational boating and the use of motor boats specifically equipped for water skiing. Catalonia was at the forefront with the celebration of the World Water Ski Championship in Banyoles in 1971.

Currently, water skiing remains a niche sport, but one with a loyal following, which combines professional competition, amateur hobbyists and leisurely recreation.

## Types of disciplines

**Classic water skiing:** slalom, tricks, jumps and overall.

- **Slalom:** this category consists of zigzagging around 6 buoys while the boat passes through the middle, always passing by the buoys at the same distance, leaving 3 on the right and 3 on the left. The objective is to get around the 6 buoys at the highest recorded speed on the boat and with the shortest possible rope distance.
- **Tricks:** this event involves two 20-second turns, in which the skier must perform as many acrobatic tricks as possible without falling. Each acrobatic trick has an established score and whoever scores the most points wins.
- **Jumps:** this contest involves a ramp about 6 metres long and almost 2 metres high, on which skier must make the longest long jump possible (the world record is more than 70 metres).
- **Overall:** this event involves the weighted sum of the scores from the 3 previous events. Only skiers who compete in the 3 previous categories can compete in this event; the overall competition is the most demanding and complete contest.

## History of wakeboarding in Catalonia

The history of wakeboarding in Catalonia can be found in various reservoir in Catalan waters, such as the Baells and the Sau. After the opening of various cable ski parks, such as BCP in Barcelona, along with other facilities in Cubelles and Arboç i Montgat, one of the best sports facilities can be found in the Olympic Canal of Castelldefels. The site offers a 5-pulley cable ski, hosting regulated international competitions. This is the birthplace of the incredible wakeboarders who today continue to bring joy to our sport and disciplines.

**Wakeboarding:**

- **Wakeboarding and wakeskating:** Both sports involve skiers hold onto a trapeze-style handlebar behind a boat and they must perform jumps and tricks in the wake. These sports consist of performing the greatest number of tricks with the highest aesthetic quality, execution and height possible within a circuit.
- **Cable wakeboarding and wakeskating:** In this sport, skiers also hold onto a trapeze-style handlebar but this time to a rotating cable ski along an established circuit with obstacles and they must perform tricks both in the water and in the different modules.

In both these sports, athletes are required to wear a helmet as well as a life jacket in all cases. They are also scored in both events as in the previous discipline and they have one full lap around the circuit to do it.

## Water ski boats

Boats are key in these disciplines. Specialised boats have a hull designed to generate controlled wake and sufficient power to maintain constant speeds. They incorporate ski tow pylons and GPS speed control systems. Competition boats guarantee technical equality between participants.

## A passionate community

Beyond competition, wakeboarding has created a cohesive community in Catalonia. Coaches, families and athletes share their experiences and effort, reinforcing the bond with the values of the sport. This collective spirit has been fundamental to keeping the practice alive over the years.

## Clubs and locations in Catalonia

Catalonia has a network of clubs and spaces suitable for water skiing and wakeboarding. Some of the most important sites include:

- Olympic Channel of Catalonia (Barcelona)
- Ventalló Water Ski Club (Girona)
- 2Llacs Water Ski Club – Lleida Ski&Wake (Lleida)
- La Cabanya Wakepark (Tarragona)
- DeltingParks (Tarragona)
- El Rancho Wakepark (Tarragona)

## Leading Catalan athletes

Catalonia has been the birthplace of athletes who have left their mark in the four disciplines of classic water skiing on a national, European and world scale, such as the Mill brothers (Xavi and Pep), the Morros siblings (Ivan, David and Andrea), the Ballús brothers (Roger and Jordi), the Noguera siblings (Àlvar, Lluís and Laura) and the De Medrano sisters (Júlia, Cristina and Sofia). All of them have contributed to placing Catalonia on the European and world water skiing map.

Prominent wakeboarding and wakeskating athletes include Enric Dosta, Luis Montana, Kike Cornejo, Israel Planas, Paco Bengerel, Raúl Lopez, Noa Tamaral, Elena Bodi and the current World champion, Telma Cester, who have all placed these two events on the European and world scene.







## First-person experiences

*Lluís Noguera. Classic water skiing*



Lluís Noguera participates in the overall competition (slalom, tricks and jumps), which requires strategy and a lot of physical and mental effort. Argo 16. Museu Marítim de Barcelona. Photo: Lluís Noguera Collection.

My first experience with water skiing was in the Alt Empordà, at the Club Estadi Màgic in Sant Pere

Pescador. I was only 5 years old, but I remember perfectly the feeling of putting on my skis for the first time: the tension of the rope, the engine's acceleration and the water pushing with force. That moment of initial imbalance quickly transformed into a feeling of freedom, gliding over the surface of the Fluvià river.

Over the years, and with the support and passion of my entire family, especially my father and my brother Àlvar, I have been professionalizing my hobby by training and competing all over the world. In my case, my speciality within water skiing has been, precisely, the overall competition. That is, not competing in just one category, but competing at the same time in slalom, tricks and jumps, in order to be able to score in the overall sum. This discipline requires a special strategy and physical and mental effort, in order not to risk too much in a single category and, at the same time, not to lose sight of the results of the other competitors. The pressure of having to compete without being able to fail in any of the 3 categories makes the humility of accepting defeats the basis of the learning process. But, what I like most about the overall contest is being able to enjoy the sum of emotions of each category: the acceleration and fluidity of the slalom, the agility and power of the tricks and the fear and adrenaline of the jumps.

Practicing this sport has given me the opportunity to get to know more than 40 countries, learn 4 languages, make friends all over the world, be able to climb the podium of world and European championships and, above all, grow with the values of effort and perseverance. This is, without a doubt, the magic that has made me loyal to water skiing.

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**First-person experiences**

*Telma Cester. Cable waterskating*



Telma Cester's acrobatic tricks with a waterskate board, her speciality. Photo: Guillem Casanova, for Munich Sports.

I first started in the Sau reservoir with my parents, by boat at the age of 6. Then they opened the OCP facilities at the Olympic Canal in Castelldefels where I started cable wakeboarding and wakeskating when I

was 7. At the age of 11, after my first competitions at a national level, I was invited to my first European Championship in Israel and after a silver medal in the under-18 category in the waterskating event, I was invited to the World Championships in Mexico, where at only 11 years old I won my first gold medal in this category.

Later, I traveled to the United States at the age of 12 to compete in a professional waterskating competition and won first place against the best skiers of the time. When I returned to Spain, I broke my tibia and fibula in one of the training sessions and after 6 hard months of recovery I managed to go to my second World Championship in Argentina, even though I wasn't at 100%, where I had to make a choice between the two disciplines given the shape I was in after my injury.

After several medals in both European and world championships in different categories, today I can say without a doubt that my passion and the fact that I still can enjoy having a board under my feet both inside and outside the water makes me feel free.