

*So you want to get over the fear of Diving do you?*

*By Coach Brad Snodgrass*

What do I mean don't get over the fear? Well let's think about it: you've stepped up to try a reverse dive for the first time (substitute gainer one 1.5 or 2.5 for you veterans) and you're terrified. You say: "what if I whack my head on the board?" That's a pretty healthy fear if you asked me - I wouldn't want to whack my head. When you cross the street, don't you ask yourself "what if I don't get to the other side before - you know...bam!" That's also a very healthy fear - you definitely want to avoid speeding cars. You'll live longer.

The difference is that the diving board won't kill you like a car would. It never has killed a diver in the history of competitive diving and probably never will. Why? Well for starters, divers don't hit the board that often. I've been coaching for twenty years and using my handy pocket calculator, I just estimated that I've coached more than half a million reverse dives (yikes, that's a lot of gainers!). Of those 500,000 reverses coached, I've seen one of my divers hit the board exactly once. Not that it wasn't scary - it was. One of my college divers hit on a gainer one and a half pike in her conference championship and got seven stitches, and a nasty bump. Ouch! But that was all. I know for you hockey players that doesn't even count as an injury. She did the same dive two weeks later at Nationals a safe distance from the board for sixes. So one in 500,000 from my own experience - pretty lousy odds if you asked me. Your chances of winning the lottery are probably better (Please! - no wagering).

But yes, it can happen - although highly unlikely, you can hit your head. If you do, the likely outcome is a bad bump or a cut, as in my diver's case. Why not a worse injury? One of the reasons why is that the board is flexible - it "gives". So the board tends to move away as contact is made, minimizing the force of impact. And most importantly the board is relatively light. The last two feet of an aluminum cheese board weighs only about two pounds. You physics buffs will remember that momentum (mass x velocity) and force (mass x acceleration) are directly proportional to weight. The take home message is that if you have a choice of getting whacked by a speeding car or a diving board, choose the diving board.

OK, I apologize - you're probably more scared now that you were before you started reading this article. Well good. Like I said, you should be. You don't want to hit the board. How do you avoid hitting the diving board? Well, luckily, scientist have studied this for years and determined that JUMPING A SAFE DISTANCE from the board prevents hitting the board. Wow! Isn't science amazing? Just like crossing the street a safe distance from cars helps prevent being hit by one. Phew! And I thought I had to stay indoors today!

Seriously, you don't have to stay indoors to be street-safe and you don't have to quit diving to avoid hitting the board. I'm 39 and I'm still afraid of hitting, but I'm also still diving. That's why I make sure my jumps and lead-ups are a safe distance from the board first before trying any new dive. Don't ever lose your healthy fears of real danger. Rather, trust your coach to guide your dives to a safe distance from the board and then

you'll have nothing to fear. Except of course after practice when you cross the street - please be careful!

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