

LONG BEACH (AP) — When Andy Houghton shouted "hit it," the boat lurched forward, hauling him swiftly across the water.

The 28-year-old cut left, then sliced right while his Kan Ski — a surfboard-water ski hybrid for the disabled — shot spray. He went two-handed, one-handed and, at times, completely into the air.

Houghton, who has been paralyzed for eight years, ripped across the water as if ESPN were filming. Then, as he cruised atop the boat's wake, cradled in a specially designed seat, a smile crossed his face.

A few years ago, Houghton wouldn't have been here at the Long Beach Marine Stadium. The athlete and outdoorsman didn't like facing issues of the disabled. He wouldn't even get near other wheelchair users.

But eventually he moved beyond his 1987 motorcycle crash, when he hit a tree. The incident, which forced Houghton into a wheelchair, was linked to his drunken driving.

"Someday you're going to have to make a change — I waited five years before I did it," he said of the day he stopped feeling self-pity. "I was really depressed. I was sitting at home, and I said, 'This is ridiculous.'"

The days of anger, frustration and pessimism seem to be over for good.

"My success story is not that I'm able to walk again, but that I'm able to live my life everyday," said Houghton, a paraplegic.

Houghton and sponsors of the first Land Meets Sea Sports Camp for People with Disabilities gathered recently to prepare for a week



Associated Press Photo

### Andy Houghton water-skis at the Long Beach Marine Stadium.

of events, which included sports activities on water and land.

Houghton — a busy man who always keeps a cellular phone nearby — said water-sports camp includes water-skiing, Jet Skiing and sailing. Other activities, such as wheelchair basketball, tennis and floor hockey, took place at the same time at Irvine Valley College in Irvine.

"We just want to get people out there so they don't waste any valuable time," said Karen Moreta, a camp coordinator for Research Medical, a health care supply company that deals primarily with clients who need wheelchairs or have spinal-cord injuries.

Another sponsor was California Handicapped Skiers of Big Bear Lake. The group is one of the few to offer disabled people snow and

water-skiing instruction, said Tom Peirce, assistant of the organiza-

tion's Alpine Challenge summer program. It provided special equipment so everyone could participate in the water sports.

Peirce said the goal of the camp is independence.

"Once they (water-ski), they realize it is something they can do on their own or with ... friends and family," he said.

Last week, Tom Hollenstein's only limitation was the fact that his custom-made ski wasn't yet ready to ride. The former amateur surfer had his favorite surfboard company craft him a tailor-made water-ski.

Hollenstein, who broke his neck in a mountain biking accident, said he got into water-skiing because he was sick of being a bystander.

"I had to find a water sport to replace the surfing. This is what I'm doing that," said Hollenstein, 34, quadriplegic.

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