

I was just made aware of this great series of still shots on the [www.ohnozone.net](http://www.ohnozone.net) site by roger lukes who pointed out that they show apolo using some of the same starting techniques and tactics he has heard us teach here in glen ellyn. so, seeing as how this is a phase of the race we could all learn about or review, whether you are a veteran or novice, i am going to do a quick step by step description of a few key starting tactics that may prove helpful to you in future races.

**page down to see the pictures below that these comments are referring to>>**

in the top row - **ROW 1,**

frame 1 - remember all your equipment, stay relaxed

frame 3 - ignore the crowd, except wave when you are introduced

**ROW 2,**

frame 2 - **if you draw position # 1 (the inner most position)**, at the pre-start line and when the starter says "go to the start" and you move to the start line and set your feet, set up over your spot as far as you can to the OUTSIDE (toward position # 2) and spread your arm(s) to help make your space and protect it

frame 4 - use your arms, same as in frame 2

frame 5 - now you are set, feet positioned in your stance awaiting the "ready" command before you go down. what you have done is prevent others from squeezing you to the inside so you don't have a good straight line to first block, and, you have made some extra room for your arms and legs to lessen the chance of contact. feet set at a 45 degree angle to the line, with the front foot rotated out, toe down and heel up, to preposition it into the first step to save time once the gun fires.

**ROW 3,**

frame 2 - once again, not being shy about using the arms to stake out space

frame 3 - as the ready command approaches you see the weight getting pre-set as far forward as possible so that everything is set to go forward aided by gravity, with just enough pressure on the back foot to get a decent grip on the ice for a first push/step. eyes are focused down somewhat, zeroing in on the first block! ears are listening for the gun. body is relaxed and ready to react, the brain is thinking "i own that first block and no one is going to beat me to it!"

frame 4 - gun has fired, left foot lifts up and aided by gravity the body starts falling/pancaking forward while the back foot pushes and the back arms punches/jabs forward, left knee and foot begin a short quick movement forward.

frame 5 - you can see the first step with the left is short, more important it is quick than long followed by the back foot now coming through in a short quick step of its own. turnover and quickness is the key, you have to stay out in front of the "wave" or line of skaters or risk getting boxed/blocked out and dropped right at the start. arms drive powerfully and quickly too as they help set the tempo for the legs and provide momentum as well as keep the space around you clear and open and free from your competitors' arms and torso. knee drive, foot plant, full quick extension in rapid succession.

**ROW 4,**

frames 1 to 5 - the body keeps "falling" forward the whole way, the strides get longer but are still quick, the body begins to drop lower and lower. stride length and body lowness start to approach the regular skating position and the skater picks up speed.

**ROW 5,**

frame 1 - the prize! yes! i am at the first block, first! the advantage of being in lane 1, if you don't get boxed in to the inside, is that even a tie to the first block is a WIN for YOU by virtue of you being on the inside closest to it. you get to start your turn first and you'll be in front the first turn and coming out, hopefully!

frames 2 and 3 - all the skaters are still taking shorter and quicker than normal strokes through the turn still building speed. the one in the lead and any on the outside can start to take longer ones since there is less traffic but you don't want to slow your turnover and momentum too much too quickly before you are up to skating speed.

frames 3 and 4 - rather than settle for 3rd position with 4 to go in a 4.5 lap race the skater in position 3 starts to take a risk and swing out wide hoping to grab first, but at least maybe slip into second, and have at least a chance for a win. by going wide and shifting into overdrive you can take faster, longer, more powerful strokes because you are not crammed up in traffic. of course, if you don't get into first, or find a hole to slip into between first and second, you could end up in last being stuck on the outside as the whole pack goes by. but in a short race like the 500, being in third at the start means almost no chance to pass into first unless there is a major fall or slip. its very important in shorter races to get off the line first, and, if in the # 1 position avoid getting squeezed/boxed to the inside, inside the line to the first block.

**NOW, if you are on the far outside position**, closest to the wall, reverse what you do on the inside in # 1 position to avoid getting squeezed out toward the wall and be stuck farther away from the line to the first block! take your position as close to the INSIDE as possible and use your ARMS to crowd/push people toward the inside and make room for yourself so you don't get stuck against the wall. if you can get a good jump and get a step on the field CUT IN toward the first block as quick as you can and box out the folks behind you. if you are in a tie or behind the field off the line keep to the outside and just keep cranking AROUND them and try to pass the crowd into first by the entry to the second turn of the race.

**FINALLY, if you are in one of the middle positions**, use your arms to make/preserve space to BOTH sides of you and try to get an half step on the field and keep it, cutting in toward the first block on the most direct line that you can to box out the folks behind you. it's like catching a wave on a surf board, you want to catch it and then work to ride in front of the crest of the wave (the other skaters in the start line). if you get boxed out go outside and crank around as if you were in the outer lane going to plan B.

**IN GENERAL**, be prepared for being tough, standing and defending your space, and for incidental contact with blades to blades and arms to arms. the most focused and aggressive and fearless skaters usually come out in front.





<< we talked about "hips in" or sliding the hips over keeping them parallel to the ice! this photo is a great example of that! also shows the "downward pressure" on the right hip (and shoulder too). you can just feel the power and pressure into the ice by just looking at this shot! his body is like one giant coiled spring pushing down from the hips.



<< finish strong, skate ALL THE WAY to the line and even slightly PAST it no matter what place you think you are in!



<< after you skate well go over and tell your coach thanks for all the great training, preparation, and advice!

**there's more to learn about starts, but this will get you started.... and it takes advantage of these great photos roger discovered. thanks roger! and thanks [www.ohnozone.net](http://www.ohnozone.net) and noelle neu who took these photos!**

[http://ozannex.typepad.com/photos/torino\\_2006\\_mens\\_500meter/index.html](http://ozannex.typepad.com/photos/torino_2006_mens_500meter/index.html)

**let me know if you have any questions.**

**Coach Carl**