

Lake Richard In Dow Water Ski Athletes Excel Again in Nationals

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DOW - Local water-skiers from nearby Lake Richard in Dow excelled once again in 2020. As of this year, every skier on Lake Richard has placed in the Top 10 in Nationals competitions or rankings at least three times.

Competitive water skiers ski in defined age divisions, with the “skier age” for a given year being his/her age on January 1. The age brackets for younger skiers have shorter intervals than for older skiers; and competitive skiers range in age from 3 to 90. Skiers compete in local, then State, then Regional and finally the National Championships -- if they qualify. There are five Regions, with the Lake Richard skiers skiing in the 12-State Midwest Region. Additionally, the older kids have qualified for invitation-only international elite tournaments.

Sammy Stackpole (Florida Southern) and Nellie Roberts (Clemson) finished their outstanding collegiate skiing careers in 2020 and have moved on to Chiropractic and Medical school. After graduating, Sammy won a state title in trick and a Nationals title in jump, with two second-place finishes at state and a fourth-place finish in jump at nationals.

Katie Schultz (skier age 12) finished fourth at Nationals and Regionals in the jump event, bringing home the gold medals at the Illinois State Championship in slalom and jump. She also placed first in slalom at the Midwest Regionals and second at state in trick. Katie is a seventh grade student who plays volleyball at Jersey Middle School, competes in gymnastics and is active in horseback riding.

Brendan Schultz (skier age 14 and state titles in all three events, Brendan placed first in slalom and fourth in jump at Regionals. At Nationals in Zachary, LA, Brendan finished fourth in jump. Brendan's exceptional performances throughout the year secured him an invitation to an elite ski event coupling younger skiers with professionals at the Stillwaters Pro Team Challenge in Oconomowoc, WI. There he placed second in slalom and jump and third in tricks. Brendan is a sophomore member of the track and soccer teams at Jersey Community High School and recently was awarded the distinction of Eagle Scout.

Brett Stackpole (skier age 18) had a break-out year in the jump event, improving his personal best from 171' in 2019 to a personal best in 2020 of 201', joining the exclusive "200' Club" in late October in a professional event (below). Brett placed fourth at Regionals and Nationals in the jump event. He also placed second in tricks and third slalom at the State tournament. Brett is a sophomore skiing for the University of Alabama and is majoring in Aerospace Engineering.

Edward Roberts (skier age 16) elevated his national jumping status this year with consistently strong performances. Currently ranked #3 in the world jump standings, Edward had a personal best jump of 171' early in the season en-route to second place finishes to his brother at the State and Regional tournament, along with a third place finish at Nationals. A three-event skier, Edward also won the slalom and trick events at State and placed third at Regionals in slalom and second in tricks. In addition to his skiing, Edward is a 3-sport athlete at Jersey Community High School and is ranked at the top of his junior class.

Will Roberts (skier age 17) is a freshman skier at the University of Alabama, majoring in Mechanical Engineering. This year he continued to excel in the jump event. He won the "trifecta": securing championships in jump at State, Regional and National competitions. In June, Will joined the 200' Club with a jump of 201' followed by a 212' jump in October, securing for him the "Open Men" Midwest skier record in the jump

event. (The “Open Men” division includes professional skiers and qualifying amateurs of any age.) Will is ranked 5th among Open Men jumpers in the U.S. In the age 17-20 international division, Will is ranked 4th in world jump standings. Will also won the State and Regional slalom titles.

Will, Brett and Edward were all honored with invitations to the Jr. U.S. Open in Maize, Kansas in mid-June, where the best junior skiers in the world came together to compete. In the “older boys” category, Brett placed fourth and Will placed third in jump. In the younger group, Edward placed second in jump. Invitations to the Malibu Open were also extended to Brett, Will and Edward. The Malibu Open in Charleston, SC was held on September 11th and 12th with best professionals and juniors in the world attending. The long trip proved to be worth it as Brett placed fourth, while Edward placed third and Will placed second, all in jump.

Riverbender will continue to follow this extraordinary group of athletes who live on a man-made water-ski lake just south of Jerseyville in Dow. With consistently high World and National rankings, they continue to improve and impress year after year.