



Three Amigos from Dow Reunite to Ski and Study Engineering at Alabama

by Jeff Roberts

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DOW - Brett Stackpole (21), Will Roberts (20), and Edward Roberts (18) now find themselves together year-round once again. Water-skiing competitively in the college ranks and studying engineering at the University of Alabama provides a mere change of latitude for these life-long friends who have lived and water-skied together for almost twenty years at Lake Richard in Dow (just south of Jerseyville).



Studying Aerospace Engineering and a member of the Air Force ROTC, Brett led the way to Tuscaloosa as a student/skier after he graduated from Jerseyville High School in 2019. The next year Will and Brett convoyed on the August road trip to Tuscaloosa. Will chose to focus on Mechanical Engineering. Now, in 2022, Edward joined in that “off-to-school” ride and finds himself studying Civil Engineering while skiing for the Crimson Tide ski team.

Edward has benefitted from having Will and Brett to turn to as he makes the adjustment to college at Bama. He noted: “Will and Brett have drastically helped me with every part of my transition to college. From helping me with my homework while we are away on trips to tournaments, helping me prepare for tests that I am nervous for, coaching me to improve my skiing, all the way to giving me advice on the best places to eat around campus. There has not been a single day since I got here that I haven't spent significant time with one of them which has made my transition to college feel a lot more familiar and comfortable, and just more fun.”

Together almost daily since they began hanging out together at Lake Richard in 2004, the three boys have found themselves playing, watching videos, skiing, going to school

and inventing crazy games and contests that it seems no one could imagine. All having GPAs over 3.5, they excel both academically and in their water skiing, which is focused heavily on the jump event.

Brett reflected on memories of growing up with Will and Edward: “My favorite memory growing up with Will and Edward at Lake Richard is definitely pretending to pull each other jumping into the water when we were very young. We would take a handle off of a rope and one of us would be the driver and the other would be the skier (we would typically call ourselves either Sammy Duvall, Freddy Krueger or Zack Worden, three all-time greats). We would then proceed to run around the dock and yank each other into the water, either boosting out a big jump, or more frequently launching a massive out the front crash. Playing games like this made for some pretty awesome memories to look back on.”

Through the years at one time or repeatedly, each has been ranked in the top five ski jumpers in the world in their respective age groups. Each is currently in the top five ski jumpers in collegiate skiing. They have overcome crashes, injuries and disappointments, each time finding the other two to lift them back up.

Water skiing isn't the only thing they do together. As Tommy Newman, owner of a lake near Chattanooga announced last week-end at a collegiate tournament at his lake while Brett was jumping: “I visited Lake Richard a couple of months ago and found a climbing wall, rope swing over the lake, trampoline, jet ski, basketball court, pickle ball court, pool table, ping-pong table and a few footballs. And then, when those Lake Richard boys get tired of playing, they go out on their lake together and each of them puts out massive 200' jumps.” The boys are all well-rounded athletes, swimming competitively, playing hockey, football, basketball or tennis, with all three together on the tennis team together in high school.

A typical jump session at Lake Richard finds one boy driving, one taking video from the passenger seat and the other skiing. Then they alternate. As Tommy observed, usually that jump session follows a lot of playing; but when the skiing begins, they become laser-focused on the task at hand. Exceptional driving is critical to safe jumping and makes possible superior ski jumps. Each of the boys is an exceptional boat driver. The performance of a driver significantly affects the skier performance, particularly at the elite level these three have achieved. The boys know this well and work feverishly to provide each other the most advantageous and safest pull possible on every jump.

The videos serve as a key tool for spotting errors and improving performance. On a particularly good jump, the videos allow the boys to discuss the jumper's timing and technique that produced the exceptional jump. Will credits Brett, Edward and the process for his success: “Having Brett and Edward as my boat crew has made a huge

impact on my skiing. We are always watching videos and trying to find any parts of my skiing that can be improved. Having this level of support day to day allows me to ski at a high level throughout the entire year. Without the two of them, my skiing wouldn't be where it is today."

Few other jumpers grow up together and enjoy the trust and rapport that Brett, Will and Edward have. Watching the boys working together highlights what has enabled them to become among the top jumpers in their age groups in the world: they revel in each other's success.

Brett's sister, Sammy is soon to complete her chiropractic studies at Logan University after a tremendous career in collegiate skiing at Florida Southern University. At Clemson University, Nellie was the number one women's skier in slalom, trick and jump, falling just one foot short of setting the Clemson jump record after COVID caused the cancellation of the 2020 spring ski season. She is now in her third year of medical school at SIU. Michael Roberts is an eighth grader and part-time videographer for the boys; plays basketball, soccer and golf. He joins in the aforementioned fun with the older boys every day in the summer.

At the south end of Lake Richard live Brendan (18) and Katie (16) Schultz. They, too, are exceptional competitive water skiers. Brendan won the national title in jump a few years ago and is consistently ranked in the top five in the country. Katie has been on the national, regional and state podiums for jump for the past several years and is an excellent over-all skier. Brendan, an Eagle Scout, is a senior at Jerseyville High School, playing varsity soccer and running track, exceling as a pole vaulter. Katie, a sophomore at JHS, had a long and successful gymnastics career and now plays volleyball at JHS. She also continues to pursue her love of horseback riding.

There must be something in the Lake Richard water.