

Will Roberts Captures National Title: Three Dow Boys Shine In College Water Ski Nationals

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ALABAMA - University of Alabama Junior Will Roberts, senior Brett Stackpole, and freshman Edward Roberts had a bright moment recently for the Alabama Crimson Tide at the Collegiate Water Ski Nationals.



Will Roberts had the winning jump of 181 feet at the Collegiate Nationals at San Marcos River Ranch in Texas. Stackpole was third with a jump of 172 feet and Edward Roberts was seventh with a jump of 165 feet.

The three boys are all from Dow, IL., and have been lifelong friends.

Jeff Roberts, also a fantastic competitor in his own right, said he was proud of all three boys, who are like brothers.

"I am certainly happy they have enjoyed working hard and learning the technique necessary for elite jumping," Jeff said. "More than that, I am most proud of their kind hearts and humility. I don't know what more a dad or mom could hope for out of their children."

The three boys were introduced to water skiing at an early age and quickly excelled in the sport. Will credits his dad, Jeff, with teaching him about the sport and shaping him to excel.

"I think we all learned the right way, which makes it a lot easier than what most people have," Will said in a previous interview.

Additionally, earlier this fall, Will had the farthest collegiate jump of the season with a jump of 186 feet.

Jeff Roberts pointed out that 16 months prior, at the very site and on the very ramp where he later was to win collegiate nationals, Will went out the front in the prelims of the Junior U.S. Open after qualifying for finals as the No. 1 seed on his first jump.

“That crash shattered Will’s spleen and emergency surgery followed his airlift from the San Marcos Hospital to an Austin trauma center,” Will’s dad said. “There, a surgery team swept him from the helipad and was able to remove the leaked blood and the dozens of pieces of his spleen found in his abdomen after successfully stopping the bleeding. During this period of transportation and surgery, Will received six units of blood. He was sidelined for two months following his week-long stay at the Austin hospital.”

“After leaving the hospital Will soon discovered that many people had questioned his decision to take that third jump in a wind no jumper would like to jump in,” Jeff Roberts continued. “During the two months of downtime and ever since Will has had to deal with the fact that many onlookers had questioned his decision-making while he juggled his physical and mental recovery from the crash.”

Will’s winning jump at nationals had many parallels to that previous jump that nearly ended his jumping career. This year, at the exact site, jump, and crosswind as last year, Will skied from the dock as the top seed in the last event of collegiate nationals. Will was faced with one of the most high-pressure situations any jumper could endure: pressure from his team, pressure from the competition, but most severely, pressure and thoughts from his crash 16 months ago.

“Despite all of that, Will went out and showed no hesitance, winning the event in convincing fashion,” his dad said. “Yet another parallel, he secured the win on his second jump but chose to send it on his third jump, improving his score by four feet. With that 181-foot jump, Will showed himself and everyone who doubted him what he is capable of.”