



Lake Richard Water Skiers Continue To Have Global Impact

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DOW - The Lake Richard in Dow water skiers continue to have global impact. Jeff Roberts of the group announced today another chapter in the saga of the competitive water-ski jumping accolades earned over the years by the skiers from Lake Richard in Dow.

Brothers Will and Edward Roberts recently returned from Chapala, Mexico (20 miles south of Guadalajara) where they competed in the Under 21 World Water Ski Championships.

Qualification criteria for the “Worlds” are extremely onerous, with the U.S. sending only twelve skiers to the event, six of whom were chosen as members of Team U.S.A. In all, 94 skiers from 19 countries arrived in Chapala early last week for the four-day competition that ran from Wednesday, June 14, through Saturday, June 17. Notably, the Roberts brothers were one of eight sets of siblings from five countries qualifying for the event.

Having jumped 188’ in the preliminary round, Edward was seeded third for the second and final round of competition on Saturday. Earning a bronze medal with a jump of 184’ in the final round, Edward was joined on the podium by the winner from Argentina and the second-place finisher from Italy. Will had the longest jump of the tournament of 203’ on his first and only jump in the prelims, earning him the #1 seed for the finals. For that jump, he also earned 1,000 points for his six-member U.S. Team, the most points possible for a single event.

A 180’ jump on his first jump in the finals was followed by a fall on the second jump. Will was forced to forfeit his third jump due to an equipment failure sustained in his fall. His 180’ jump earned him a fifth-place finish in the finals. With Will’s 1,000-point contribution, Team U.S.A. won the team competition by a narrow margin over runner-up Chile and third-place finisher, Australia.

Last fall, the brothers (Will then age 20 and Edward then age 18) competed together for the University of Alabama ski team that finished second in the national competition.

94 colleges across the country field ski teams, the top 24 of which come together in late October each year to compete for Division 1 and Division 2 national titles. In his third season of collegiate skiing last fall, Will was joined by his brother Edward following Edward’s graduation from Jersey Community High School, where Edward’s academic and athletic accomplishments were notable. These accomplishments included Defensive Player of the Game in the Illinois Shrine Football Game with players selected from high schools state-wide, All-State in Tennis, All-Conference in Football and was #1 in his graduating class.

Both majoring in engineering, the brothers took to the warm Alabama waters of Lymanland, a ski lake 20 minutes south of their Tuscaloosa campus to train for the 2023 collegiate ski season.

There they focused on collegiate jumping, which has more conservative limitations on boat speed and ramp height than non-collegiate nationally and internationally sanctioned events. Other than in collegiate skiing, men's skiers are allowed a 35.4 mph boat speed and a ramp height of 6'. At the collegiate level, the maximum ramp height is only 5' with a 31.7 mph boat speed limitation. Needless to say, these limitations reduce the distance jumpers are capable of achieving.

The collegiate ski season consists of several "multiple-college" tournaments during September and October leading to qualification for the nationals, held last October in San Marcos, Texas.

Will had the nation's longest collegiate jump in 2023 with a measurement of 186'. Edward posted the third-longest collegiate jump in the nation of 180', putting him in third place all-time in collegiate jumping by a freshman. Sitting between Will and Edward was Jonny Leutz from nearby Jacksonville, IL also on the Alabama team with a 182' jump. Then followed Alabama's Brett Stackpole, the Roberts' life-long neighbor at Lake Richard, with the fourth longest 2023 collegiate jump with a distance of 172'.

Will won the collegiate national title with a 181' jump and Edward placed sixth. In winning the 2023 men's team jumping title, the Crimson Tide received contributions from a crop of exclusively Illinois natives.

In addition to points earned by the Roberts brothers, the Crimson Tide received points for second place added by Jonny Leutz and third place contributed by Brett Stackpole.

From a nationwide vote, Will was named the 2023 Male Athlete of the Year by the National Collegiate Water Ski Association.

Brett, Will and Edward have been skiing competitively since 2009. Brett led the way to Alabama in 2019, followed by Will in 2020 and Edward in 2022. Over the years, they and their older sisters, Sammy Stackpole (who skied for Florida Southern University) and Nellie Roberts (who skied for Clemson University) were joined by Lake Richard neighbors, Brendan and Katie Schultz in local, regional, and national ski competitions where all have had tremendous success.

Countless national, regional, state, collegiate, and now world medals and titles have landed at Lake Richard. This man-made lake in tiny Dow, Illinois, has become known to skiers world-wide.

