

100 years riding the water



PHOTO BY KATE RECHTZIGEL
Younger members (from left): Huck, Carter and Lily take their turn at waterskiing during a practice July 11. This is Lily's first year on the team.



PHOTO BY KATE RECHTZIGEL
Hope Peterson puts her skis away after a practice on July 11. The team practices two or three times a week, depending on when they have shows.



PHOTO BY KATE RECHTZIGEL
Team members (from left): Cole Nelson, Hope Peterson (top), Nora Schmitz, Hanna Hewitt (top), Nick Wall, Jackson Hewitt and Kennedy Rollie (top) perform a flying v maneuver during a practice July 11.



PHOTO BY KATE RECHTZIGEL
SkiDox Waterski team members talk during a practice July 11. The team allows members to perform a wide variety of waterski maneuvers and connect with a large group of people.

SkiDox Water Ski Team performs prestigious acts, develops teamwork

BY KATE RECHTZIGEL | STAFF WRITER

MAZEPPA - In 1922, a man named Ralph Samuelson made several attempts to get on the water behind different fishing boats and even an airplane on Lake Pepin in Lake City.

"He finally tried a pair of boards which he used as skis and a clothesline which was used as a tow rope when he skimmed across the water for the first time," Madilyn Schmitz said.

Samuelson is noted as the first water-skier, ski racer, slalom skier and first organizer of a water-ski show. This year marks 100 years of water skiing in Minnesota.

Madilyn is an active skiing member, coach and on the board of directors for the SkiDox Water Ski Team which began in the mid-1950s, roughly 30 years

after Samuelson invented water skiing. Members are from Rochester and its surrounding cities and range in age from 3 to 50 years old.

"Thousands of spectators and fans have come from miles around, as well as other countries, to see the feats performed by our team and enjoy fun, interesting performances of grace, beauty, daring and skill," Madilyn said. "The team is like many athletic organizations in that it tries to develop individuals, promote competition and teamwork, and create lasting friendships."

Carter Schmitz, 20, of Adams, agreed.

"I like the sense of comradery it provides," he said. "Sometimes we are even able to be out there skiing with 20 people at a time."

Every other week beginning on Memorial Day through Labor Day, the team puts on a one hour-long show and performs 12 acts which include barefoot skiing, pyramids, ballet line, swivel skiing, doubles and trios, and more.

"Usually this is a themed show that has a story from the beginning to the end, often like a play," Madilyn said. "This year, the show does not have a theme."

Each act is unique and fun for members of the team. Carter, for example, enjoys the wakeboard act.

"I get to do flips," Carter said. "It's my happy place."

His teammate, Kin-dra Walstad, 29, of Zumbrota, relishes in the ballet line performance.

"I like the ballet line because it's fun to be out there with all the girls and see the hard work and teamwork it takes to pull it off," she said.

The team practices two times a week when they have a show and

three times a week when they do not have a show scheduled. New skiers learn the fundamentals of water skiing such as how to put water skis on, how to roll ropes, basic body positioning, and water and boat awareness. More advanced members learn how to swivel ski, barefoot ski, go over jumps, perform flips and participate in line doubles.

During line doubles, someone lifts another in the air with acrobatic positioning so they can climb pyramids or perform tricks, said Madilyn.

First-year member, 10-year-old Lily O'Brien, is working her way through the various skills learned as a part of the team.

"I started only learning deep water skiing and can now do a dock start and tricks," O'Brien said. "I really like how I can do tricks such as the line doubles, but it's weird because you are not the person skiing."

SkiDox page 9



PHOTO SUBMITTED
The SkiDox Water Ski team makes a large pyramid (bases from left): Austin Walstad, Matt Lamphere, Nate Schrader, Thomas Mergen, Chris Roser, Matt Hoef, Cole Nelson, Travis Schmitz, Carter Schmitz, Don Roberts, Brad Belcher, (2nd tier from left): Sierra Belcher, Macy Warnke, Carmen Mergen, Madi Schmitz, Sara Hoef, Kaitlyn Larson, Nora Schmitz, (3rd tier from left): Rachel Trotman, Sydney Belcher, Hanna Hewitt, Samantha Sheridan and (4th tier): Sawyer Sheridan. This year marks 100 years of the waterskiing sport.

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