



WAR OF THE WORLDS

SA RIDERS PERFORM ADMIRABLY AT WAKEBOARD WORLDS IN ITALY



With international stars like Harley Clifford, Andrew Adkison, Nick Jones, Amber Wing and Raimi Merrit all competing at the recent 2011 World Wakeboard Championships in Italy, the SA Team found the competition tough going. However, considering our lack of international experience our team showed real heart on the water, and proudly represented their country. Leisure Boating brings you a full report...

The South African Wakeboard Association (SAWBA) has not fielded a team to compete internationally since the EAME Championship in Tremolat, France. Due to lack of funding, the SA Team also missed out on the European Champs in Portugal (2008) as well as the European and African Wakeboard Championship in Sweden (2010).

However, thanks to Lotto South Africa, the SA Team was able to attend

the 2011 IWWF World Wakeboard Championships in Milan, Italy. Team SA haven't competed internationally for quite some time, and the riders were surprised at the high standards of riding displayed at the Worlds.

Team South Africa consisted:

Tich Mitchell (team manager), Jono Joseph (team captain), Darryn Ridgway and Justin Selby (Masters), Deidre van

Niekerk and Gina Faccio (Open Ladies), Morgan Krause, Clayton Krause, Shaun Faccio and Shaun Meredith (Open Men), Dylan Mitchell and Ryan Durham (Junior Men).

Team captain and rider Jono Joseph must be applauded for his role as mentor in the team set-up. He spent most of his time on the dock, handing his team-mates the tow line, giving sound technical advice, while helping settle nerves.



The SA Team at the LSN Wakeboard School (Left to Right): Morgan Krause, Dylan Mitchell, Jono Joseph, Clayton Krause, Justin Selby, Cesare (Italian coach), Gina Faccio, Shaun Faccio, Shaun Meredith, Deidre van Niekerk, Darryn Ridgeway and Ryan Durham.

Shaun Meredith accompanied the team to gain some valuable knowledge of event management of this magnitude, as SAWBA has put in a bid to host the 2012 European and African Championship on the Vaal River in February. Word is that Shaun will be acting as the event manager for the EAMES.

This year's World Champs was the biggest event to date with 253 riders from 36 countries. The SA Team arrived a couple days earlier (9th July) to get familiar with conditions. The team also had to get acquainted with local conditions, the transport to and from the site at the picturesque Idroscalo area, near Milan.

After arrival, the team hoped to get a final practice in behind the tournament's official towboat — Parks Bonifay's impressive Mastercraft X-Star edition, with a brute 6.0-litre Ilmore performance motor. But the tournament's strict "no official familiarisation" regulation disappointed the riders, as only one practice session was allowed per rider.

On the Monday the team arranged a practice session at the LSN Wakeboard School, headed up by Italian national coach Cesare at the breathtakingly beautiful Lago di Viverone, just one hour west of Milan. Cesare kindly weighted up one of his boats, and allowed the SA Team to practice on his contest rail for the day.

The team then booked an unofficial practice the next day at Idroscalo, starting at 09h00 and ending at 10h06 — six minutes per rider at 30 Euros a pop! The practice went smoothly and it seemed like the team felt settled and excited for the next day's challenges. That evening, the SA athletes attended the opening ceremony, looking snazzy in their national colours, flags and vuvuzelas!

The boys are back in town!

The Junior Men's qualifying heats started at 12h00 with 37 riders competing. Cape Town sensation Dylan Mitchell was placed in the 6th heat



ABOVE: Clayton Krause performs a Dum-Dum during his heat. BELOW: Dylan Mitchell at the starting dock.



Dylan Mitchell and team captain Jono Joseph share a moment at the starting dock.

against some tough competitors like Massimiliano Piffaretti (ITA) and Martin Velazut (SUI). Yet, he still managed to grab a quarter-final spot by finishing in second with 56.35 points — just 3.78 points less than Massimiliano (60.13).

Our other junior, Ryan Durham, competed in the 7th heat and rode well to qualify first with 33.79 points in the bag. During the quarterfinal heats, Dylan Mitchell was unfortunate to go head-to-head against Dylan Prideaux

(junior Aussie champ), Massimiliano Piffaretti (Italian junior champ), Jorge Gill (Great Britain junior champ) and Mark Kroon (The Netherlands national junior champion) — this was like a world final!

Dylan rode well with four Mobes and a Mobe 5, but unfortunately, couldn't pull off a 720 at the end of his second pass. With a run of 62.91, Dylan came third behind Massimiliano's 65.9, so the contest was over for Dylan. Ryan

was luckier in his draw of the heats and managed to win his quarterfinal and progress through to the semi-final with 53.7 points — beating Nick Gibson (NZ)'s 49.01.

In the semi-finals, the top three from the two heats go through to the final. Ryan rode well and had a clean run, but unfortunately, he did not make it to the final, so he ended up in eight position, with Dylan placing ninth.

Master Blaster!

Darryn Ridgeway and Justin Selby represented South Africa in the Masters' division. These ou toppies weren't to be taken lightly as the bar was set high with big Mobes and intense tricks displayed during the passes.

The practice went well for both Justin and Darryn, but unfortunately, neither of them made it through to the qualifying heats and was subjected to LCQs (Last Chance Qualifiers). There they were unlucky enough to have qualified for the same heat. The heat was tough, and Justin (28.68) and Darryn (20.01) managed to end in a decent 3rd and 4th place respectively, but it wasn't enough to go any further in the competition.

Separating the MEN from the boys

Shaun Meredith entered into the Open Men division and rode a personal best in his qualifying heat. Jono Joseph came second to the U.S.'s Nick Jones in his heat, and finished it off in style with a Steezy Indy Backside 180 to go through to the next round of the competition.

In the next round he had a tough heat, and ended up in fifth position behind his old rival Michael Timmers (NED). Clayton Krause placed second in his qualifying heat and Morgan managed to dominate his heat for both of them to go through to the quarterfinals.



SA Pro Champ Morgan Krause and team captain Jono Joseph was always on hand to provide advice and mentor the junior riders.



Shaun Meredith recorded a PB at the World's



Shaun Faccio did not ride at his best and was relegated to LCQ. In the LCQ, he was last off the dock and showed how valuable experience and ability is in international competitions. He kept his cool and rode tactfully, covering all the riders who rode before him to win the heat and qualify for the quarterfinals.

Morgan won the second heat and progressed through to the semi-finals. Unfortunately for the Saffas, Shaun and Clayton had a tough heat 5 to contend with, being matched not only together, but also with the likes of seasoned veterans Andrew Adkison (U.S.) and Dominik Hernler (AUT). Shaun managed to lay down a clean pass with technical Mobes to advance to the semi-finals with Morgan. Unfortunately, this was the end of the road as both got knocked out in the semis.

Lady Killers

SA's two wakeboarding divas Gina Faccio and Deidre van Niekerk looked good from the word go. However, during Tuesday's practice run, Deidre managed to tweak her left knee on a Railey, which saw her grinding teeth through the qualifying rounds and then through the the LCQs, and ultimately, she dropped out of the quarterfinal race.

Gina, on the other hand, managed to stick her run consistently with massive execution to make it through to the quarterfinals, semis and all the way into the finals. She was SA's top performer and the only SA member to make it to a final. There, she was up against the big guns that included Riami Merrit (USA), Amber Wing (U.S.), and Robbie Rendo (ARG). Gina performed admirably and brought home an overall 6th place at the Worlds. Editor's note: Send a girl to do a man's job!

In the team event, South Africa managed to place 13 out of a total of 37 countries. Considering it was in our winter season, and a really cold one at that, the team did really well and was relatively happy with the outcome.

The SA Team would like to extend a big thank you to Lotto, who sponsored the training as well as the entire trip. Without them, SA's best riders wouldn't have been able to gain the exposure and experience and improve and grow the sport at home.

Thanks to Lotto who sponsored the training and entire trip without them our best riders would not have been able to have had the exposure and the experience to attend the Worlds and be able to improve and grow the sport at home.

Thanks must also go out to SAWSF (South African Waterski Federation) and Darryn Ridgeway (SAWBA chairman) for establishing long term relationships with Lotto and developing the sport. Also thanks to Sally Graze (SA Waterski secretary) for her full support, Riana Durham for her help with clothing and accommodation, SkullCandy for supplying the team with headphones, and the SAWBA committee.

RESULTS

Team Overall

1. U.S.	525
2. Australia	435
3. Italy	390

Open Men Final

1. Harley Clifford (AUS)	87.11
2. Andrew Adkison (U.S.)	77.58
3. Nick Jones (U.S.)	75.69

Open Women Final

1. Raimi Merrit (U.S.)	65.24
2. Amber Wing (AUS)	58.02
3. Robbie Rendo (ARG)	49.67



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