Connor Poggetto And Lexi McCauley Selected USA Water Ski & Wake Sports’ Athletes Of The Year

USA Adaptive Water Ski Team earns Team of the Year honors

POLK CITY, Fla. – USA Water Ski & Wake Sports and its nine sport discipline organizations are pleased to announce respective award recipients for 2019. Connor Poggetto (Carmichael, Calif.) and Lexi McCauley (Winter Haven, Fla.) have been selected USA Water Ski & Wake Sports’ 2019 Male Athlete of the Year and Female Athlete of the Year, respectively. The USA Adaptive Water Ski Team earned USA Water Ski & Wake Sports’ 2019 Team of the Year honors. Jeff Clark (Lakeland, Fla.) was selected as the recipient of the Award of Merit – the organization’s highest award for a volunteer.

Poggetto had an impressive 2019 IWWF World Disabled Championships as the only skier on the USA Adaptive Water Ski Team to contribute to the team overall score in all three events. Not only was he essential in helping the U.S. win gold in team overall, he achieved individual gold in Seated overall. To top it off, he also won gold as the overall male skier (across all categories) with the highest overall score of the tournament, in this case, among both men and women. Poggetto exceeded his own World tricks record twice, breaking it in the prelims with a score of 1,810 points. In addition to an extraordinary performance at worlds, he was the first seated athlete to be invited to ski at the Nautique US Masters, where he exhibited in three events: wake boarding, tricks and jump.

McCauley won titles in slalom (personal best 14.80 wake crossings), tricks (5,800 points) and overall (2,982.46 points) at the 42nd Barefoot Water Ski National Championships, Presented by Bank First, Aug. 22-24, at the Blue Moo in Alma Center, Wis. McCauley’s winning score of 5,800 points is a new Open Women national tricks record. At the 2019 Pan American Barefoot Championships, Nov. 1-2, in Chapala, Jalisco, Mexico, McCauley swept gold medals in slalom, tricks, jumping and overall.
The USA Adaptive Water Ski Team won the gold medal at the 14th Barbara Bolding/Jim Grew Fund Disabled Water Ski World Championships, July 25-28, in Skarnes, Norway. Australia earned the silver medal and Great Britain earned the bronze medal.

Fourteen athletes represented the 2019 USA Adaptive Water Ski Team at the biennial event. More than 40 athletes from 11 countries participated in the championships. The United States tallied 13,757.91 points, followed by Australia with 8,069.92 points and Great Britain with 7,355.63 points. U.S. team members earned a total of 26 individual medals, including eight gold medals, 10 silver medals and eight bronze medals. Members of the USA Adaptive Water Ski Team were: Marco Bungert (Huntersville, N.C.) – Seated Men; Nicholas Fairall (Andover, N.H.) – Seated Men; Chad Guzman (Gilbert, Ariz.) – Seated Men; Elijah Hager (Alexis, N.C.) – Seated Men; Katie Mawby (Grand Haven, Mich.) – Vision Impaired Ladies; Elisha Nelson (Woodland, Calif.) – Standing Ladies; Robbie Parks (Lexington, N.C.) – Seated Men; Janet Paulsen (Acworth, Ga.) – Seated Ladies; Connor Poggetto (Carmichael, Calif.) – Seated Men; Mike Royal (Magnolia, Texas) – Vision Impaired Men; Gregg Stokes (Rocky Mount, N.C.) – Standing Men; Sarah Switzer (Madison, Ala.) – Seated Ladies; Craig Timm (Center City, Minn.) – Standing Men; and Chuck Wesson (Charlotte, N.C.) – Seated Men.

Geneva Brett (Los Banos, Calif.) served as manager; Jessica Van Dyk (Belding, Mich.) was the assistant manager; Matt Oberholtz (Oroville, Calif.) was the coach; Brian Detrick (Elk Grove, Calif.) was the assistant coach; and Dr. Keith Barbour (Monroe, Mich.) served as the team physician.

Mawby won gold medals in Vision Impaired Ladies slalom (5.50/55/18.25) and tricks (670 points); Royal won the gold medal in Vision Impaired Men slalom (5.50/58/12.00) and the bronze medal in tricks (590 points); Timm swept gold medals in Standing Men slalom (1.50/58/18.25), tricks (850 points), jumping (98 feet) and overall (2,194.59 points); Guzman earned the silver medal in Seated Men slalom (1.00/49); Hager earned bronze medals in Seated Men tricks (1,620 points) and overall (2,436.52 points); Nelson earned silver medals in Standing Ladies tricks (400 points), jumping (29 feet) and overall (1,545.49 points), and the bronze medal in slalom (1.50/40); Poggetto won the gold medal in Seated Men overall (3,012.28 points) and earned silver medals in tricks (1,640 points) and jumping (75 feet); Stokes earned silver medals in Standing Men jumping (53 feet) and overall (1,302.80 points), and bronze medals in slalom (4.00/52) and tricks (170.0 points); Switzer earned silver medals in Seated Ladies jumping (38 feet) and overall (2,241.36 points), and the bronze medal in slalom (1.50/37); and Wesson earned the bronze medal in Seated Men jumping (69 feet).
Clark, 78, is an active senior judge, administrator and committee person. He has been an active member of the Lakeland Ski Club for more than 60 years. He has been a member of the American Water Ski Association since 1955, and served as a member of the AWSA Southern Region Council (1969-1986), Executive Vice President of the AWSA Southern Region (1990-1996), AWSA board of directors (1990-2005) and USA Water Ski board of directors (1990-2003). He was a recipient of the USA Water Ski & Wake Sports Foundation’s Award of Distinction in 2007.

Additional 2019 awards from USA Water Ski & Wake Sports and its respective sport discipline organizations are as follows:

- **USA Water Ski & Wake Sports:** Deppe Kern (*New Smyrna Beach, Fla.*), Volunteer of the Year (American Water Ski Association); Kat MacCalla (*Winter Haven, Fla.*), Coach of the Year (National Show Ski Association); Minnesota Hydrofoil Club (*Longville, Minn.*), Club of the Year (United States Hydrofoil Association); and Molly Schaefer (*Wausau, Wis.*), Junior Athlete of the Year (National Show Ski Association).

- **American Barefoot Club:** Ben Groen (*Winter Haven, Fla.*), Volunteer of the Year; Jimmy Tauras (*Austin, Texas*), Coach of the Year; Megan Adams (*Center City, Minn.*), Rising Superstar; Lexi McCauley (*Winter Haven, Fla.*), Female Athlete of the Year; and Jackson Gerard (*Babson Park, Fla.*), Male Athlete of the Year.

- **American Kneeboard Association:** John C. Haile (*Orlando, Fla.*), Ambassador of the Year.

- **American Water Ski Association:** Debbie Kern (*New Smyrna Beach, Fla.*), Volunteer of the Year; Blaze Grubbs (*Rio Linda, Calif.*), Junior Athlete of the Year; Erika Lang (*Gilbert, Ariz.*), Tricks Skier of the Year; Taylor Garcia (*Winter Garden, Fla.*), Jump Skier of the Year; Regina Jaquess (*Santa Rosa Beach, Fla.*), Overall Skier of the Year and Athlete of the Year; and U.S. 45+ Pan American Water Ski Championships Team, Team of the Year.

- **National Collegiate Water Ski Association:** Florida Southern College’s Tanguy Dailland (*France*), Male Athlete of the Year; Louisiana-Lafayette’s Jaimee Bull (*Canada*), Female Athlete of the Year; Louisiana-Lafayette’s Harry Spavin (*Great Britain*), Outstanding Male Leader; Clemson’s Ashley Stevens (*Seneca, S.C.*), Outstanding Female Leader; and Louisiana-Lafayette, Team of the Year.

- **National Show Ski Association:** Dan Wang (*Verona, Wis.*), Volunteer of the Year; Rich Vermillion (*Janesville, Wis.*), Official of the Year; Event Organizer – Eric Gran (*Shawano, Wis.*) – of the 38-person front barefoot line by skiers from more than 16 teams held at the Shawano Ski Sharks ski site on the Wolf
River in Shawano, Wis., That’s Incredible Award; Lake City Skiers (Warsaw, Ind.), President’s Award; Kailey Koehler (Lake Geneva, Wis.), Female Athlete of the Year; Ethan Shulda (Twin Lakes, Wis.), Male Athlete of the Year; and Mad-City Ski Team (Madison, Wis.), Team of the Year.

- National Water Ski Racing Association: Sophia Rivera (Seal Beach, Calif.), Most Improved Female Athlete; CJ Ferguson (San Pedro, Calif.), Most Improved Male Athlete; and Todd Haig (Redlands, Calif.), Athlete of the Year.

- United States Hydrofoil Association: Greg Crockett (Riverton, Utah), Passing The Handle; Joey Taylor (Waycross, Ga.), Most Improved Athlete of the Year; Mike Murphy (Canyon Lake, Calif.), Lifetime Achievement Award; Leah Stilwell (San Diego, Calif.), Female Athlete of the Year; and Jake Bradley (Breckenridge, Colo.), Male Athlete of the Year.

- USA Wakeboard: Andrew Adkison (Chipley, Fla.), Athlete of the Year.

- USA Adaptive Water Ski & Wake Sports: Sarah Switzer (Madison, Ala.), Female Athlete of the Year; and Connor Poggetto (Carmichael, Calif.), Male Athlete of the Year.

The award recipients will be honored at USA Water Ski & Wake Sports’ annual awards banquet on Saturday, Jan. 25, 2020, at the RP Funding Center in Lakeland, Fla. The event, which celebrates the 2019 water ski season, will be held in conjunction with USA Water Ski & Wake Sports’ mid-winter board meetings for the 20th consecutive year. The 2019 award winners were selected either by the USA Water Ski & Wake Sports Awards Committee or by the respective sport discipline organization.

##

NOTE TO MEDIA: Additional information on USA Water Ski & Wake Sports is available at www.usawaterskiandwakesports.org.