

Water Ski and Wakeboard Canada names Hall of Fame inductees

By Louis Daignault

Water Ski and Wakeboard Canada has announced that two athletes Vailla Hoggan of Brandon, Man., and Jeff Heer of Richmond, B.C., and two builders Ross Outerbridge of Toronto and Vern Oberg of Edmonton will be inducted into its Hall of Fame later this summer.

In addition, Eric Horton of Kentville, N.S., will be the first ever inductee in the Pioneer category.

Hoggan packed in an impressive career in the sport. In 1968 she became the first Canadian woman to win gold in slalom at the Pan American Championships. That same year, the multiple Canadian champion finished first in women's tricks at nationals with a Canadian record score. She retired at age 22 to pursue her education and enjoyed a successful career as a teacher and counselor. She was inducted in the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame in 2007.

"It's unexpected and a real honour," said Hoggan. "It's always nice to get that recognition after so many years. I'll always remember the friends I made in the sport. Retiring at 22 may seem young but at the time that was pretty much the norm. We didn't see athletes competing into their thirties as today."

Heer was one of Canada's first wakeboarding stars. He was the world champion in 1996 and was Canada's first ever national champion and first winner at the prestigious Wakestock competition. He continues today to have a big impact on the Canadian wakeboard scene as coach and mentor to current international stars Rusty Malinoski, Chad Sharpe and Aaron Rathy.



"I'm super stoked about the induction," said Heer, who currently works in national water ski and wakeboard distribution in Vancouver. "It was a real thrill to be part of the sport in its infancy and to help it evolve to the point to where it is becoming more and more mainstream around the world."

Dr. Outerbridge was involved with Water Ski and Wakeboard Canada as a volunteer for over a quarter century with duties ranging from coaching to officiating to providing medical support. He also wrote and edited virtually all the coaching and course conductor manuals for the association. It is estimated that in his 24 year involvement with the



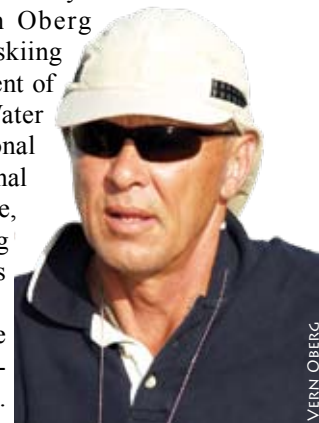
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coaching program he delivered technical courses to more than 900 water ski coaches.

"I've really benefited from my involvement in water skiing at the professional and personal level," said Outerbridge, an orthopedic surgeon based in Kamloops, B.C. "I developed as a person very much through that involvement. At the competitive level, definitely our victory in the team event over the U.S., at the 1993 world championships really stands out."

Vern Oberg has been involved in Canadian water skiing since 1959 at all levels. He was president of both Water Ski Alberta (1992) and Water Ski Canada (1993-95). At the international level he was president for the international federation's Pan Am region for a decade, and influential in water skiing being added permanently to the Pan Am Games in 1995.



"Before the Pan Am Games there were virtually no water skiing competition sites in South America," said Oberg. "Now there are at least six at which we can hold international competitions. It's really been great for the sport and the Pan Ams have become our Olympics."



Horton's innovative spirit has resulted in the evolution of speed control systems which is responsible for the increased accuracy at which boats are able to be controlled in competition. The PerfectPass speed control system is now used all over the world and is required if any world records are to be recognized by the International federation.

"It's exciting to say the least," said Horton a former engineer with Nova Scotia Hydro who now operates PerfectPass full time. "It amazes me that what was once a recreational venture to help my kids in water skiing has evolved this much."

"Our sport has achieved much in Canada and internationally, and that's principally because of its special people", said Dan Wolfenden, WSWC Executive Director. "Our Hall of Fame Committee continues to have a nice challenge – difficulty singling out those for recognition amongst many. Our 2008 class have truly achieved the highest level of recognition and made tremendous contributions to our sport."

Heer will be inducted at ceremonies at the 2008 Canadian Wakeboard Championships in Regina, Sask., while the four other honourees will be enshrined at the Canadian Water Ski Championships in Newmarket, Ont.