

Practical Homeschooling Wake's Up!

The November/December 2006 issue of Practical Homeschooling included a feature story on Girls4Sport wakeboarding team rider Raimi Merritt.



WAKE'S UP!

Girls4Sport team rider (and homeschooler) Raimi Merritt won the girls' division at the WWA Wakeboard World Championships in Fort Worth, TX, this past September, following up her success as a three-time National champion. Santa Cruz, CA-based performance clothing manufacturer Girls4Sport sponsors not only Raimi, who is considered one of wakeboarding's fastest rising stars, but another rising star, her older sister Chloe, as well.

In case you're wondering, wakeboarding is to waterskiing what snowboarding is to downhill skiing. Towed behind a boat, you attempt tricks while riding a single board.

Chloe, 15, and Raimi, 12, have only been competing since 2004, but the sisters from Lantana, FL, have dominated the awards podium from the start, beating out their division's reigning champion to clinch first and second place in their first competition: Tommy's South Florida Wake Board Tour.

Between them, they've since claimed four national titles, two world championship gold medals from Seville, Spain and Moscow, Russia, four first-place overall wins on the Florida Gravel Tour, first and fourth place at the 2005 Pan American Wakeboard Championships, and first and third at the 2005 U.S. Pro Am Wakeboard Championship.

Despite their competitiveness in the water, the sisters have avoided competition between themselves. "We go out there to have fun," said Raimi. "We don't get mad when one of us wins because we tend to switch off. Sometimes Chloe wins and sometimes I win, but we both usually place at the top."

For the Merritt sisters, wakeboarding remains first and foremost a way to have fun,

and they enjoy sharing their sport with their friends. "I really like teaching friends how to wakeboard," said Chloe. "I enjoy watching the look on their faces."

Chloe, who is in ninth grade, and Raimi, who is in seventh grade, are both homeschooled, which provides greater flexibility for training and traveling for competition. "We just bring our school books with us," said Raimi. Chloe excels at math, while Raimi likes language arts.

The sisters train twice a day at Lake Osborne with their coach, Dean Lavelle. They are both working on perfecting their 360s, adding more tricks to their repertoire, and hoping to turn pro within the next few years. According to their coach, "maybe a dozen girls ever" in the history of wakeboarding can do a "Raley," just one of the tricks Raimi, the younger sister, recently mastered.

The girls' role models include Jimmy Trask, Dean Lavelle, Tara Hamilton, Barrett Pearlman, and their mom and dad. "They're all positive people who encourage us to be better in the sports that we do," said Chloe.

In addition to Girls4Sport, the Merritt sisters are also sponsored by Liquid Force Wakeboards, Ten 80 Vests, Fly High Wakeboard Gear, State Farm Insurance, Goodyear, and Real Estate Mastery.

Why so many sponsors? Here's what one says. "Girls4Sport's mission is to inspire girls of all ages to lead confident, active lives," says Kim Ruby, President of Girls4Sport. "Chloe and Raimi's winning attitudes make them exemplary Girls4Sport team riders. By effectively balancing school, sport, and life, they have become inspiring role models for other young women."



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