

LES TODD

Born January 14, 1952 in Charlotte, N.C.

Graduated Myers Park H.S. 1970

Attended N. C. State 1970-1973

Learned how to ski on two skis at age four on Lake Wylie, Catawba River, N.C.

Learned how to ski on one ski at age six

Skied every summer with mom and dad and friends.

Started driving / pulling skiers at age twelve

Became proficient at slalom, trick and barefoot skiing

Later teenage years joined the Charlotte Water Ski Club. Learned how to jump and fly kites, both flat wing and delta wing kites. Performed in ski shows for the club

After five semesters of college, dropped out and got a job in professional show skiing and driving with Tommy Bartlett Water Shows and in the summer of 1973, skied and drove tow boat at Sea World of Ohio.

Winter of '73/'74 moved to Orlando, Fl. and skied with Mike Pare and Bill Walker. He drove his first water ski tournament (collegiate) at Rollins College in the spring of 1974. He pulled Mike Pare with his personal Hydrodyne twin rig, which he still possesses today. He flew a delta wing kite at Sea World of Florida for exhibition only, this was before the park formally opened.

In the summer of 1974, he returned to Tommy Bartlett Shows and performed at the famous Wisconsin Dells. He drove more shows there than in Ohio, as well as skiing and flying delta wing. This is where he met US World Team member Cindy Hutcherson. She was taking a year off from competition and show skiing. Well... eleven months later he married Cindy, May 11, 1975, moved to Pierson Fla. to live on Purdom Lake.

1975 was his first year to water ski in 3 event tournaments. He became an assistant driver and drove for AWSA tournaments. Also, Bob Hutcherson encouraged him to get his assistant judges rating. In 1975, he attended his first US Masters tournament where his wife Cindy skied. Please note that in the past 40 years he has only missed two Masters, 1976 and 1985.

In 1975, he attended his first US Team Trials at Judd Spencer's lake in New York, for Cindy to try out for the Team and Bill Wenner put him to work reading meter C in Jumping for the entire tournament.

In 1975, he skied in his first Southern Regional Championships, in Lakeland, Fl. and then the US Nationals in Tomahawk, WI. After the nationals Cindy and Les returned to Wisconsin Dells to once again show ski with Tommy Bartlett Water Show to end of the season.

In 1976, he continued tournament participation, both skiing and driving. During 3 weeks of July, he returned to Tommy Bartlett for road show at Navy Pier, Chicago, Ill. He

skied, barefooted, and flew kite. This is while Cindy competed at 1976 US Masters for her first title and overall win.

In 1977, he earned his regular driver rating and ceased all ski show work and devoted himself solely to tournaments. Cindy made the US World Team and they traveled to Milan, Italy. Les drove practice for the team.

In 1978, he drove tricks at the Liz Allen Super Stars, Groveland, Fl., The night before, being asked by Jack Walker, he said he never slept a wink. This was the start of what he considered a very high level of tournament boat driving. In skiing that year he was the Men 1 Fla. State Overall champion and also has his best finish at US Nationals, a 6th place Men 1 jump.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he drove his first international tournament, the Jr. World Championships in Sherbrook, Canada.

In 1981, after completing requirements in the previous year, he became an AWSA Senior Driver.

From 1979 thru 1982, he hosted a the Pierson 500 a three round jump tournament at his lake in the fall, three of which were world record capability. Two national jump records were set, Cindy Todd OW and Lucky Lowe Men 2. Note the tournament in 1982, tried and used for the very first time in the world, the current 82m and 41m, two segment timing, in jumping. This was done with the help of Ed Brazil. And we are still using this today.

During the reign of Parker Overton as EVP of the Southern Region, in the early 1980s Les was a member of AWSA Boat Drivers committee for several years. This committee was responsible for upgrading policy and procedures for drivers' ratings and promotion. Some of which are still used today.

In 1983 he drove his first professional water ski event with Jack Walker. This was the finals of the Master Craft Pro Tour near Atlanta, Ga.

1986 was the first year that he was selected as a driver at the US Masters Water Ski Tournament. Thanks to Jack Walker and Larry Meddock, under the supervision of chief Judge Reg Barnes of Canada. He has driven the tournament for the past 29 years

In 1989, he and Cindy traveled to China for three weeks to train the Chinese World team. Not only did he help with skiing, but their coaching staff realized that their drivers needed maybe more help than the skiers, so he was immediately put in the class room as well as conducting on the water training for their drivers. A trip he quoted "I will never forget!"

In 1989 he was appointed as a driver for the IWWF World Tournament in West Palm Beach

He was appointed in 1990 as Chief Driver at US Masters, now 23 years as the Chief Driver.

Starting in 1990 his number of professional tournaments greatly increased. Between 1990 thru 1998 he drove full time, every event for the Pro Water Ski Tour put on by MasterCraft and World Publications. After the retirement of Jack Walker in 1994, He drove every Pro Men Jump event, including other events not associated with the tour.

1990 driver for all the PAWS tour

1991 driver PAWS tournament in Tokyo, Japan

1995 he was a driver for the first Pan American Games tournament in Santa Fe, Argentina. Please note that this was also the first speed controlled water skiing event. The results were encouraging, so in 1996 the second tournament to use speed control was the US Masters which he drove. On to a new era in skiing, and to Perfect Pass where he was challenged and helped with software improvements. A lot of drivers rebuked speed control, but realizing it was here to stay he decided to be the best button pusher he could be.

1996 he drove the Pan American Championships in Santiago, Chile. The Perfect Pass system was being used and while it did have its troubles in the beginning, they persevered. It was not getting in tolerance times, so chief judge Ruth Johnston suggested to Les "do whatever it takes to get good times". So he did a lot of driving that event and you could say that this was a "Les Todd" assisted speed control event. It was accomplished.

1997 World Cup tournament

1997 US Open Pro Water Ski , Greenville, N.C. sponsored by John Deere

Around 1998 thru 2003 came the new radical jump event Ski Flying. He was on the ground floor with Correct Craft and Scot Ellis in making this happen. In the beginning he drove most all ski flying. Also gave input to Perfect Pass to help the system work and give the desired pull. The system went to wide open throttle but did not know when to stop. He was the one that pulled back on the throttle for a safe landing, whether it was a 200' plop or Jaret Llewellyn's record 299' at OWC in Orlando. He drove all Ski Fly events at the US Masters, Lake Hancock in Orlando, in Arizona, the US Nationals in Calif. and the 2000 and 2001 Big Air.

2000 WaterSki Magazine's America's Cup, Okeeheelee, WPB, FL.

2001 America's Challenge, Santiago, Chile

2002 Latino's, Mexico City, Mexico

He spent seven weeks in Santiago, Chile for the Pan Am, in November 2002 thru the Jr. Worlds in Jan. 2003. He drove on that lake everyday for that period of time. He also was put in charge of all practice for the Junior World Championships.

2003 US Open Pro Water Ski, Walt Disney, Fla.

2003 Pan Am, Santo Domingo Right after the '03 Masters, Les and Joy Todd went to the Dominican to help and train the locals to put on a tournament to see if they, the locals, would be able to handle a Pan American Championship tournament. It went great, both of them.

2003 U21 World Championships, Santiago, Chile

2004 World Cup, China

2005 WWSP, Orlando. There were more WWSP tournaments; don't remember where, except the doctor's place up north.

2005 Drove exhibition skiing at the Daytona 500 and Firecracker 400 on Lake Lloyd , Daytona Beach, Fl. for WWSP

2005 MasterCraft Pro Water Ski

2005 US Open Pro Water Ski

2005 IWWF World Championships, China

In 2006, with Skifly.com in charge, He took his jump ski ramp to the Daytona 500, Lake Lloyd and drove more exhibitions skiing and jumping. Some of the show stuff coming back!

2006-08 he was the boat driver for the Pro Record Jump tournament at Beaver Lake in NC

2007 US Open, Downtown Disney

2007 Australian Open, Albruy, and NSW he had to get a boat operator license for that trip

In 2007 the speed control system "Zero Off" came on the scene. He did extensive work with Joe Grogan of E-Controls along with Freddy Krueger. and Andy Mapple. There were many days of testing the system along side Perfect Pass and the older Lockett timing and days of just skiing for skier input. He and Joe worked one on one together in the boat. He relied a lot on input from Les for software values and improvements. Quote "In the end I say it does a fabulous job and has made my boat driving better. I

can really work on my boat path skills and not worry about speed and like in the old days, rpm's, oil pressure, etc.”

2008 Pro Jump, Santiago, Chile

2009 IWWF World Championships, Canada

2010 He was invited to the EAME judges, driver's seminar in Rome Italy. He addressed the whole assembly for 1 ½ hours on a Friday afternoon and instructed the drivers all day long on Saturday. Zero Off was the hot topic. The 12 drivers came from as far as England to South Africa and from western Russia.

2010 Pro Jump tournament at Hazelwood Ski Centre, London England

Concluding his list of tournaments that have been listed, this will finish with the night jump events. Now we are really going back to those ski show days.

2009, 2010, 2011 LA Night Jam, Zachary, La.

2010, 2011 King of Darkness, Detroit, Mi.

2010 Malibu Open, Milwaukee, WI.

2010, 2011, 2012 Rocketman, Polk City, FL.

2012, 2013 Orlando Soaked, Orlando, FL.

The LA Night Jam and King of Darkness really brought on high speed boat maneuvers, boat spins, and show waves for the crowd of spectators. This is what it is all about, entertainment. Les quoted “I really wish, as a sport we could do more of this.”

2014, Bogota, Col. for the Pan American Championships

US Masters, still going strong this will be the sixth year in a row that he has taken his jump ski ramp to Callaway Gardens.

Accomplishments:

Les has been involved in all aspects of water skiing all of his life.

Driving tournaments for 40 years

Driver of the US Masters for 29 years

Chief driver US Masters for 23 years

Driver of professional tournaments for 32 years

This has been done all over the US and the world in 12 countries and on 5 continents.

He not only accomplished being noted as a driver for all the listed above events, he never refused driving local events whether they were Record, Class C or just for fun. He drives with sincere thoughts of the contestant's safety and provides a pull consistent for all skiers.