



Jake Breedlove rides high

The cold air creeps onto the lake as sophomore Jake Breedlove flips the switch to lower the boat from the lift. He pulls on his wetsuit and grabs his board as he hops into the frigid fall lake. As he takes a warm-up run, he is accompanied by the familiar passion of wake surfing that he has come to know over the past three years.

Wake surfing — debatably one of the fastest growing water sports in the world — is the act of surfing the wave behind a ski boat at 10-12 miles per hour. This is most commonly achieved by using fat sacs, which are bags filled with water to add weight to the preferred side of the boat. These large bags are made of a material called Valmex, most often used in white water rafts. The added weight makes the wake larger and more pronounced for better ride-ability.

As the sport of wake surfing has developed, two different styles of surfing have emerged. The “surf” style, which Jake prefers, represents a more traditional ocean type of surfing while the “skim” style consists of a flatter board with smaller fins that allow for better spinning.

Back in 2011, Jake casually began his interest in water sports by watching his older brother, Ben, wakeboard on the weekends. Prior to wake surfing, Ben taught Jake other water sports such as skiing, wakeboarding and wake skating.

“Ben taught me almost everything I know,” Jake said. “It took him a while to get me on the water, but once he did, I began to like wake

boarding.”

Jake also began to like water sports because he was able to spend copious amounts of time with his older brother on the water. These times are precious memories for Jake because Ben passed away Dec. 25, 2011 from complications from hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.

“Ben and I would have the best times on the boat together,” Jake said. “He would always encourage me to try new tricks. When I learned a new trick, he would have to learn a new one too. I know every time I learn a new trick in wakeboarding or wake surfing, it’s all because of him.”

After Jake became increasingly comfortable with wake boarding, Ben introduced him to a sport which he had recently tried — wake surfing. After Jake’s first day, he was hooked.

“I remember one day when Ben was telling me about the world’s best wake surfer,

Chase Hazen,” Jake said. “He also told me about how Chase was the only person ever to land an air 360. I never knew that I would be doing the same trick later in life.”

Jake says that wake boarding provided an introduction into water sports that eventually led him to love wake surfing. Starting in 2012, Jake began wake surfing every weekend and then added weekday practices on to become better.

Jake’s first sponsor, Boat Beautiful, contacted him in 2013 when he was only 14. Founded by Andrew Hayslip, Boat Beautiful is a company

“After they announced me as the world’s best Men’s Amateur Wake Surfer, I was relieved and thankful that all my hard work had paid off.”

—sophomore
Jake Breedlove

As number one in the world, sophomore Jake Breedlove practices wake surfing almost every day after school on Lake Austin. “I was very excited and extremely amped that my goal was finally accomplished,” Jake said.



in international competitions

that refurbishes and cleans boats all over Texas. Hayslip, who had been Ben's YoungLife leader, contacted Jake when he heard of the talented young surfer. After he gained Boat Beautiful as a first sponsor, Jake started taking lessons to continue to get better. Once he became good enough, Jake decided to compete in tournaments for himself and to represent his sponsors. Other companies also began to see Jake's potential. As of 2015, Jake is sponsored by a variety of companies including Boat Beautiful, Thrive Clothing, Electric, Volcom, Day1 Wake and Curlview.

"My sponsors are like food — without them, it would be tough to keep on keepin' on," Jake said. "They provide me with a clean boat, boards, clothes, GoPro mounts and travel money. I have to give a lot of credit to my sponsors because they are very generous and they help me a ton."

Wanting to experience wake surfing on another level, Jake's first wake surfing tournament of this season was with the Northwest Wake surfing Association in Montrose, Washington from July 24-26 on Lake Tye. Being his first competition, Jake earned first place in his division, which is amateur. After the NWWSA tournament, Jake continued to practice almost every day on Lake Austin to keep up his pace for the next tournament. His dad drives their Super Air Nautique G23 boat while Jake surfs in the afternoons.

After getting his first competition under his belt, Jake was more than ready for his next tournament Aug. 28. With a month to train, Jake focused on capitalizing on placing first in the previous event. Competing in the Nautique USA National Wake Surf Tournament near Columbus, Georgia on Robin Lake, Jake surfed in front of dozens of judges as well as other surfers and brought home first place.

"I was nervous after my first run because I didn't do so well, and I could've done much better," Jake said. "On my second run, I did much

better than the first. I landed the tricks I wanted, and it was a big relief."

In his run, Jake landed a few airs with grabs, two 180s, an air reverse, a few bottom turns and some chop hops to make him stand out from the other competitors.

As he set his mind on the World's Wake Surfing Championship Sept. 24 in Parker, Arizona, he began practicing up to four days a week for four hours at a time. Jake returned from Arizona clutching the first place trophy yet again.

"After they announced me as the world's best Men's Amateur Wake surfer, I was relieved and thankful that all my hard work had paid off," Jake said. "Without Ben, none of this would ever have happened."

The main reason that he placed above all the other competitors in this particular tournament was because of his trick consistency. By landing persistent air 180s with grabs, as well as air reverses, Jake was able to raise the bar of the competition.

"My favorite trick is an air 180 because I can do it like no one else," he said. "I can land it, ride it backwards, then I grab the board as I switch back to normal. It's a smooth, good looking, fun trick, and I love it."

As the summer temperature sneaks away and the competition season ends, Jake tones down his hours on the lake for the first time in months. Just for fun, he takes the boat out every once in awhile, often accompanied by a cup of hot chocolate and a thick wetsuit to hold the chilly temperature of the air and water at bay.

"There's just a peace that I get whenever I'm around water, whether it's swimming in a pool, out on the lake or even just some rain," Jake said. "I just get an energy like nothing else, and being able to wake surf and wakeboard allows me to access that feeling whenever I want."

—Cullen Lowder



Photos by Mary Beth Burns