

Filled with thrills and chills, water show is

■ Portland Water Spectacular performs at Old Time Fair

PURE FUN



Above and at left: Featuring jumps, leaps, and flips, the Portland Water Spectacular show has been a staple at the fair since the 1980s.

SUBMITTED PHOTO: PORTLAND WATER SPECTACULAR

By LORI HALL
Pamplin Media Group

Sometimes the crashes are more amazing than the jumps, leaps, flips and tricks water skiers do at the Portland Water Spectacular show at the West Linn Old Time Fair, but viewers are in for thrills, no matter what happens.

The water ski club has been a staple at the West Linn Old Time Fair since 1987, performing its stunts and spectacles.

The Portland Water Spectacular was founded in 1986, gaining nonprofit status in 1987, and has around 20 members, ages 14 and up. The club currently has skiers in their 60s and a driver in his 70s, according to Jim Boland, the club's secretary treasurer. Members hail from all over the Portland metro area, including West Linn, Lake Oswego, Milwaukie and Tigard.

The show includes a couple of boats to tow the water skiers and a safety boat. The skiers perform a variety of stunts and tricks that are sure to wow the audience.

From barefoot skiing to jumping ramps to whipping 360 degrees around a boat, the stunts are endless. One of the biggest stunts the skiers perform is called a prebuilt pyramid. The skiers assemble in a pyramid on the dock and then get pulled into the water.

Boland joked that the prebuilt pyramid is always a stunner, whether there's a fall or a success.

"It's surprising, people like the crashes," he said.

Boland said audiences love all the jumps because there is more potential for "spectacular crashes."

Some of the routines include the women in the club performing a ballet line, moving their legs and hands in a choreographed routine.

"We do things on the water you don't normally see. We try to do things differently."

— Jim Boland, Portland Water Spectacular

Another recent addition is a disc and ladder routine. A skier rides on top of a disc and proceeds to climb a ladder that is balanced on top of the disc.

There will also be couples and triples routines, with the men hoisting and flipping the women, similar to couples' figure skating — minus the ice. And there is the ever-popular wake boarder to perform all sorts of flips and tricks.

"We do things on the water you don't normally see," Boland said. "We try to do things

differently."

Each year the Portland Water Spectacular comes up with a difference theme. This year's is "Smokey and the Bandit." Boland assures it is very different from the movie and residents will have to watch closely to find the common threads.

To prepare for the shows, the team has lots and lots of practices, starting indoors in late January. In the colder months it works on choreography and climbing into pyramid formations. Then, around April, its members start hitting the water to get to the real practicing.

Each show lasts about an hour. The Portland Water Spectacular Ski Show will be held Saturday, July 21 at noon and 4 p.m. and Sunday, July 22 at noon and 3 p.m. near the dock in Willamette Park.

For more information about the team, visit portlandwaterspectacular.com.