

A Conversation
With The Chairman

GORDON HALL

If you really want to know what's happening in the intercollegiate skiing scene, there's no better source of information than Gordon Hall, Chairman of the National Collegiate Water Skiing Association.

Hall, the second official chairman of the three-year-old organization, was appointed to the top ranking office last May by A.W.S.A. President Jim Lauzon. Prior to this challenging position, Hall was active in other intercollegiate capacities.

During his undergraduate days, he had the opportunity to compete in the first intercollegiate nationals where he captured third in the men's tricks events. His team, the University of Texas, placed second in the men's tricks and ranked fifth overall.

Besides his skiing accomplishments, he also served on the Board of Directors of the South Central Conference, a position he says helped prepare him for the national job.

Presently, this 23-year-old graduate student is attending the University of Texas for a Master's Degree in Business Administration, coaching the UT Ski Team, trying to maintain a somewhat normal social life while staying on top of his many intercollegiate responsibilities.

"My social life is the first to go, then the studies," he chuckled. "I was told this was a time consuming job and it certainly is."

Hall believes his greatest success so far has been in the area of communications.

"No one ever really knew what was going on before," he explained. "I started an intercollegiate newsletter in an attempt to open the lines of communication — I think it's important that we make ourselves known."



In the short time he's held office, Hall has been instrumental in rule and policy changes as well.

"The 'plus buoy' rule — slalom rule 10.01 was changed. Consecutive buoys determine placement. Additional buoys may be picked up at the minimum starting speed of 22 mph to break a tie at 22 mph. If 22 mph is completed, no additional buoys are allowed at 24 mph. If 22 mph is not completed, the skier may return at 24 mph and score additional buoys. If two women make two consecutive buoys at 22 mph, additional will break the tie (those additional scored at 22 and 24)."

Another major change that Hall strongly favors is a stiffening of rules at Nationals.

"The top intercollegiate skiers are also top in the A.W.S.A. — therefore, they're used to tougher standards. When you have tighter standards, you gain more credibility." He also said that there are more competent judges and drivers now than ever before.

As Chairman of the Board, Hall continually hears moans and groans from the skiing community concerning "varsity status."

According to Shirley Whitacre, Administrative Assistant in the Communications Department of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), at least "25 percent of the active members of the Association must sponsor the sport on a varsity intercollegiate basis" before it will even consider approval. The NCAA currently has 740 schools in active standing, which means that a total of 185 schools would need to have water skiing in their varsity sports program before the NCAA would even begin discussions. Unfortunately, most colleges reason that water

skiing shouldn't be given varsity status unless it is a NCAA approved sport, so it's a "vicious circle" as Hall views it.

"Currently, water skiing is recognized as a team sport on a non-varsity level. Most ski teams are only a few years old and before their schools are interested in offering varsity status, they want to see stability."

"I don't see varsity ranking in the near future, if ever," he continued. "However, that doesn't mean we can't progress and prosper without it! Water skiing is not doomed if we can't get NCAA."

Hall believes that manufacturers and sponsors will keep the sport afloat since much of their business is from the college-age consumer. His outlook for the future of intercollegiate skiing is refreshingly positive and he bases this opinion on two specific factors.

First, he notes the growth in scholarships and support.

"In 1979, we had \$3,000 worth of scholarships. In 1980, we doubled it to \$6,000. It's too early to say what will happen this year, but I believe we will have at least \$6,000 again."

"Secondly, the last couple of years have witnessed tremendous growth. In my region (South Central) for example, we've grown from one tournament a year to ten and from a handful of participants to hundreds. California is continuing to grow and Florida remains strong. Other parts of the nation are catching on too, though not quite as fast."

He added that the recent media and publications coverage has been supportive and he's hoping for even more this year.

"I look for more tournaments, skiing to even itself out around the country and the continuation of Nationals each year. The main thing I see in collegiate water skiing is much fiercer recruitment efforts for high school tournament skiers and for top positions."

Gordon Hall's year-long term as Chairman of the Board will draw to a close this May. Will he apply for yet another term? It's still too soon to tell, he says quietly. Based on his previous record, this outstanding young man will continue to contribute his time and talents to the industry, regardless of what title he holds.

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