

TOWNSEND, Harold.

□ JUMBO GOYER AWARD

Townsend's tops

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Water-skiing champ ^{P7}
wins city accolade
for sportsmanship

By Paul Svoboda

The Intelligencer

When it comes to sports, Harold Townsend is all wet.

Wet, as in water skiing.

And don't think the City of Belleville doesn't know it.

The city honored Townsend last night by presenting the nine-time Ontario senior men's water skiing champion with the prestigious Jumbo Goyer Trophy for 1991. According to an inscription on the trophy, the award is presented annually to "the Belleville athlete who best combines all-around skill and sportsmanship."

That would be Townsend.

His athletic resume reads like a best seller: nine consecutive provincial senior men's water skiing titles, named Athlete of the Quarter Century at Quinte Secondary School during the institution's 25th anniversary in 1979, former COSSA wrestling and javelin champion, track star, football standout and, now, "AA" novice rep team hockey coach and tutor of his two children (Sara and Jimmy) who've followed their dad's successful wake in water skiing.

And add to that, a genuinely nice guy.

"I was kind of shocked," said Townsend, who says he was caught completely off guard with last night's presentation. "Everyone started staring at me and I realized it was me. I was quite surprised."

Townsend, 44, and his wife Sandra, attended last night's City of Belleville honors and awards program which recognizes local athletes and teams who've attained provincial and national prominence. Sara and Jimmy were on hand to pick up trophies for winning, what else, provincial water skiing laurels.

Townsend says he got started in water skiing in the late 1950s.

"I started skiing north of here on Moira Lake with the Henderson brothers of Madoc," he recalled last night. "I started recreationally then got into tournaments."

But, says Townsend, he didn't meet with instant success on the competitive circuit.

"No, no," he said. "I'd say around 1967 I started doing really well."

Having played minor hockey all the way up to the adult industrial league level, Townsend found the sport a nice departure

from the cold ice of winter time.

With success on the competitive trail came more serious training. Nothing new to an athlete of Townsend's calibre.

"As you get older, you've got to make sure you're in good shape," he says. "I go to the gym at least two times a week in the winter."

Last spring, Townsend got a jump on the season, spending the March Break skiing in Florida and getting into the local waters — wearing a wet suit — in still chilly April.

"The secret is staying in shape," he says. "Then you don't run into injuries."

Each of the nine consecutive titles Townsend has won are comprised of three individual events — slalom, tricks and jumping — that lead to an overall score. He says he's always managed to do well at the others if he's faltering at one particular event in a competition.

"To win overall, there's a bit of luck involved," he said. "You have to do one event and not think about the others."

"That's funny. It varies. If one event is going bad you seem to

pick it up in another."

Meanwhile, Townsend is now not only a father to Sara and Jimmy, but he's also their head coach. And a good one, judging by the kids' early success.

"They've been in tournaments for about five years now," he said.

And what advice does he have for his young charges?

"When you're younger you should spend time learning tricks, especially when they're small they can do so many tricks and get a big lead in tricks when they get bigger and stronger."

As for his hockey coaching, Townsend is looking after the Sneaky Pete's novice AA's this season, for whom Jimmy plays. A young member of that team was within earshot of Townsend when he was asked what he emphasizes during his practice sessions.

"Skating," yelled a Sneaky Pete player.

Townsend smiled and nodded.

"At the novice level, you really have to work on the basic skills," he said. "Skating is the most basic skill. If you can't skate, you can't play hockey."

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