

PEOPLE

Townsend joins Hall of Fame

Water ski champ was all-around great athlete

In a 10-year stretch during the late 1980s and early 1990s Belleville's Harold Townsend was unbeatable.

Townsend won the Ontario Senior Men's water ski championship from 1983 to 1992.

The city will now honor Townsend for his accomplishments.

Townsend, 50, is the latest inductee to be announced to the Belleville Sports Hall of Fame. Townsend, along with Bob Cook, will join the Hall at induction ceremonies September 13 at the Market Square.

While Townsend held the Ontario water ski title for 10 consecutive years he also won several other provincial titles over the years as well as national championships. In fact he's won the national Men's IV title the past four years.

However being proficient on water skis isn't the only reason Townsend will be inducted into the Sports Hall of Fame.

He's excelled at several sports plus has also volunteered his time as a minor hockey coach.

Townsend is regarded as one of the best Belleville high school athletes ever. During his years at Quinte Secondary he was a two-way football star and in 1968 he was an OFSAA wrestling champion. He also played four years of Junior B hockey. He also competed at the University of Guelph plus advanced to the finals of the

water ski tricks and jumps disciplines at the 1973 Canada Summer Games.

Honored to be voted into the Hall of Fame, Townsend says his interest and commitment to sports goes way back to his high school days at Quinte.

And he gives a lot of the credit for his success to Jack Sisson—a current member of the Hall of Fame.

Calling Sisson his coach and mentor, Townsend says "he was someone to look up to and respect at Quinte. Jack got us involved in

sports. He encouraged us to play a different sport each season. I always looked forward to playing for him."

Townsend's life on the water began in the early 1960s when he thought the sport "looked like fun."

He soon became involved in show skiing and competing and even took part in a hectic lecture show across the province for the Ontario Water Ski Association in 1970-71.

Townsend considers his 10-year undefeated stretch as Ontario water ski champion a highlight.

"Winning the overall title is a real challenge to be consistent at," he says.

Part of the reason Townsend enjoys water skiing is because it's "a real family sport." Everyone is involved from driving the boat to actually skiing.

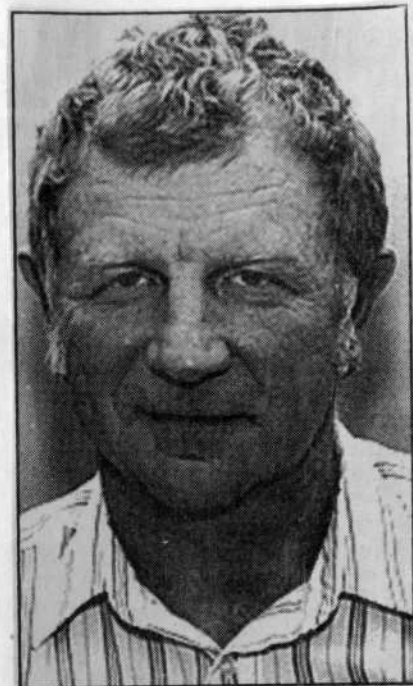
Harold's children, Sara and Jim, have done more than drive the boat over the years. They've caught the water ski bug and, like their father, have achieved national recognition.

Sara, 18, won the national tricks title six out of seven years while Jim, 16, just placed sixth at the World Junior Water Ski championships in Dijon, France. (Jim is also an accomplished hockey player and high school track star at Moira).

Townsend says he's glad his children are involved in sports.

"I know how important sports was for me. If it wasn't for Jack Sisson I may not have finished high school. I always wanted to pass so I could come back to play sports."

Townsend laments the fact that high school sports in the area are



Intelligencer photo by Ady Vos

Harold Townsend

currently on hold for the upcoming season.

"It's a really unfortunate situation. I hope it can be resolved. Sports is such a motivational thing. Everything revolves around sports...school spirit...I think participating in sports is very important," says Townsend.

Townsend, who earns his living as a tax auditor, isn't about to give up water skiing now that he has been named to the Sports Hall of Fame.

He's still involved in weight training to keep in shape and he expects to add to his string of four straight Men's IV Canadian titles.