

Sea Queens Strut Their Stuff

Synchronized swimming: Christmas time to showcase talent

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An Okotoks synchronized swimming club celebrated the holiday season by showcasing the fruits of its labour.

The Okotoks Sea Queens held its annual Christmas Water Show in a program incorporating 38 swimmers spread across nine groups at the Okotoks Recreation Centre on Dec. 18.

Sea Queens president Joanne Dzurka said a great deal of preparation goes into the routines displayed at the water shows the club puts on, especially from the relative newcomers to the sport.

“When they first learn to synchronize swim they have to start with some basic skills and they have to learn some mastery in order to begin to put together a routine to music,” Dzurka said. “It’s really the coordinating of all those pieces, the skills, the figures with the music in the water and it is much harder than just a dance routine that you might do because there’s that added element of being in the water.”

Dzurka said the athleticism and fitness required for the most basic of synchronized routines is significant.

“To stay up high you have to have a lot of core strength and actually really awesome breath support,” Dzurka said. “Some of these figures, the kids can be under water for quite a period while they’re setting things up.”

Two of the athletes with intimate knowledge of the exhaustive work put into synchronized routines are Sea Queen super star 1 level swimmers Meghan Cunningham and Caylee Dzurka. Both athletes, who have 15 years combined of experience in the sport, expressed excitement with the opportunity to perform for their friends and families.

“It’s kind of a thrill to show people that (synchronized) isn’t always just a nice sport,” said Cunningham, 15, of the misconception surrounding the sport. “That you can do stuff that’s really cool with it and show that it’s really difficult.”

Caylee agreed, “It’s quite exciting to show everyone what we’ve been doing at practice.”

The Sea Queens hold two sessions a week at the Okotoks Recreation Centre to sharpen their skills.

“Typically practices are an hour and a half long, so for the first half an hour we do warm ups... then the next half an hour is figures and the last half an hour is for routine which is what ultimately you’ll see at the events,” Caylee said.

Practice is only part of the battle. Getting the athletes prepared to look the part of synchronized swimmers is no easy feat. It is a process incorporating two coats of gelatin in the swimmers’ hair as well as detailed makeup.

“We actually take about two hours before the event to get them prepared and then they come out and swim for their little 30 second routine,” Dzurka said. “But it’s a lot of fun and it’s a great way to show parents what their kids have been doing to this point and it’s a great way to celebrate.”

The Sea Queens’ season gets underway in September, which doesn’t give its swimmer a lot of time to prepare for the Christmas Water Show.

“By the time we get to Christmas they usually only have 30 seconds to a minute of a routine put together,” Joanne Dzurka said. “By the end of the year it will generally be about two minutes in duration.”

Going forward, the Sea Queens will be preparing for their Year End Water Show on April 29 at the Okotoks pool. For more information on the Okotoks Sea Queens log on to www.okotokssynchro.com.