

Caden Welch was named the  
Men's National Champion in  
wakeboarding in 2010

# WAKEBOARDER CADEN WELCH

**Wakeboarding Teen  
& National Champion  
Calls Katy Home**

*Written by Heather Lowrie &*

*Select Photography by Suzi Issa*

Caden practices almost year round at his home at Lakes of Katy



Katy native Caden Welch, 16, loves the water. He was swimming by 8 months old, jumping off the high dive by age 1, wearing his first set of water skis by age 2, and wakeboarding by age 5. Today, he says there is no place he would rather be than in, on, or around the water. This passionate gift that Caden embraced is what has propelled him to earn the title of Men's National Champion in 2010.

## Riding the Wake

Originally called "skurfing", wakeboarding is a cross between waterskiing, snowboarding, and surfing, and began in the late 1980s. Just picture a waterskier on steroids and you have a wakeboarder. Today, more than 30 years later, wakeboarding has evolved into a competitive sport in the X Games II. Wakeboarders are towed behind a boat with their feet attached to bindings. The boat usually travels at speeds around 18 miles per hour, creating two waves, or wakes, that the wakeboarder uses to propel their body into a spinning frenzy of controlled and technical maneuvers. When Caden first started wakeboarding, they didn't even have bindings that fit, so his parents improvised, using two pairs of baseball socks to make sure the bindings stayed on and he could ride safely.

## Lakes of Katy Training

Living on the Lakes of Katy gives Welch the advantage of having his practice arena in his backyard, literally. His mom Tylor Welch says, "It isn't really training. He is just out there doing what he loves and what has always come very naturally to him." This training is what led him to be the 2010 Texas state champion in men's wakeboarding on the International Amateur Tour for the third time, which qualified him for the U.S. Championships in Florida, where he earned his current title of men's national champion.

Caden was given a special invitation, based on his nationals run, to the prestigious 2011 WWA World Championships. He is pioneering a new path by becoming the first competitor to be invited to ride in the World Championships without first competing in a WWA tournament, making it one of his proudest accomplishments as an athlete. "Wakeboarding is a great sport to compete in, because the boarding season is in the summer when school is out so you can compete in school sports during the year with your friends and then wakeboard after school and compete in the summer," he shares.

## The Katy Area Economic Development Council

### United In Building a Better Katy Area



Katy Area EDC welcomes StratITsphere Data Center Solutions. StratITsphere, an infrastructure focus and services firm, chose Katy because it has an excellent location with good fiber access, excellent access to the Energy Corridor, and support offered by the Katy Area Economic Development Council.

The StratITsphere facility will be located at 1510 Primewest Parkway, a former industrial building covering 94,000 square feet and seven acres. The location will serve as a Tier 4 carrier-neutral data center co-location facility and a network access point (NAP) and initially will employ 10 to 15 people, and may hire up to 35 employees. StratITsphere is currently engaged in projects with some of the largest energy companies in Houston.

StratITsphere, welcome to the Katy Area!



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## An Early Love for Water

Caden began wakeboarding at age 5 during family trips to water destinations like Lake Travis in Austin and Table Rock Lake in Missouri. The first time he ever tried to wakeboard, there was no learning curve - he got up on the first try and has been up ever since. "Wakeboarding is different, because it is an individual sport," he says. "You rely on yourself to be successful." He has faced his share of bumpy waters along the way, like the time he broke every bone in his lower right leg while training for the 2005 championships. Two surgeries later, he was back and in the winners' circle again, claiming the 2006 Texas state championship.

## Paying It Forward

Caden combines his love of wakeboarding with giving back, volunteering with In His Wakes Ministries out of Florida. Together with the group, the Welch family hosts an annual event called A Day to Remember. "We have around 25 to 30 special needs residents of the Brookwood Community, and they teach them to ski and give them a day on the water," says Tylor. Caden is a sophomore at The Briarwood School and says he gets his inspiration from his family. "My dad inspired me to wakeboard, because he taught me how to do it and made me love it," he shares. "It's something we can do together." The next time you drive by the Lakes of Katy and see that Tige RZ2 Wakeboard boat, look behind it and watch a national champion making history in our Katy community. **KM**

*HEATHER LOWRIE is a freelance writer who is passionate about inspiring people in the Katy community to follow their dreams and make a difference in the lives of others. She is married to the love of her life, and together, they have three children.*

Caden was swimming by the time he was only 8 months old and began wakeboarding when he was 5





# FAST FACTS CADEN WELCH

- Lives in Lakes of Katy.
- His favorite tricks are 360s and bankrolls.
- Caden loves the water, but hates to fish.
- He is sponsored by Texas Tige boat dealership.
- He is a total country boy, farming rice on the family farm with his dad and granddad.
- He has his own herd of Brahman cows.
- His license plate says, "ISHRED!"



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