

GIRL POWER FUELING TEAM DEVOSS



By Doug Newhoff

W.A.T. Media Director

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, Wis. -- Generally speaking, fishing isn't a high priority for most teen-aged girls.

Kate DeVoss can't imagine it any other way.

The junior-to-be at Prairie du Chien High School learned at a young age that the best way to share some quality time with her professional fishing dad, Paul DeVoss, was in his boat. She first climbed in around the age of 4 and since then she's been jumping in every chance she gets.

"Ever since I was really young, my dad and I have always gone out fishing," said Kate. "It was just something that kind of grew on me being with him, and it's always so fun. I love being on the water, so I guess it kind of came naturally to me."

Kate grew up watching and sometimes helping Paul prepare for tournaments ranging from the FLW Tour and Cabela's National Walleye Tour to the Walleye Anglers Trail.

It was only natural that she would someday try competitive fishing herself.

"One day she said, 'Dad, when can I do one of these with you?'" Paul recalled. "When she was 12, I said we can do it next year if you want."

So, three years ago, then 13-year-old Kate became her dad's W.A.T. tournament partner. They got a taste of success with third- and fourth-place finishes in their second season together. Then on July 9 at Bellevue, Iowa, they made history when they became the first father-daughter team to win a W.A.T. event with an impressive five-walleye limit of 31.03 pounds.

"When we started, I just wanted to win and win and win just to know what that feeling was like," said Kate. "Then it kind of progressed to having fun. Our main goal isn't really to beat anybody. It's just to have fun. You don't get a lot of moments like these, and a lot of people don't get to fish with their dads like I do. I love it."

No more than Paul DeVoss loves sharing the boat with his daughter. While his son and his other daughter also enjoy fishing, neither took to it quite like Kate.

"It's amazing and it's fun," he said. "She is always upbeat and happy. When she gets a fish on, she gets excited but she's pretty quiet. She just says, 'Dad, get the net.' Sometimes I have to look at her and say, 'You sure?' She just says, 'Oh, yeah.'"

"When I get a bigger fish on and get it close to the boat, I like to pull a little line off my reel when they make that last big dive so it lets the fish go down a little easier and doesn't jerk so hard on the line. Now she's doing that. She's just gotten better and better."

Kate also shares her dad's competitive drive. She's a talented and accomplished sprinter in high school track, and she doesn't like it when opportunities slip away on the water, either.

"At Bellevue she had a fish on and it was straight down," Paul related. "I don't know if it was a 20-incher or a 26-incher, but I couldn't see it with the glare from the sun. All of a sudden her crankbait comes flying out of the water, so that fish wasn't down very far. She says, 'Dad, you've got to put that one in the boat.'"

"I said I was sorry, but I couldn't see the fish. She wasn't mad or anything. She was just kind of giving it to me in fun."

Paul DeVoss grew up in the Dodgeville-Ridgeway area of Wisconsin as the son of a father who loved to fish. Eventually, his own passion for the sport led him into the FLW which, in turn, led him to relocate to Prairie du Chien where he could spend more time on the river.

Along the way, he developed lifelong friendships with many of the region's top anglers. Now he's watching Kate build similar relationships with her fellow fishermen.

"I've got really close bonds to all the guys who fish," said Kate, who aspires to become an accountant but isn't ruling out a career in professional fishing. "Now I really enjoy seeing everybody and cheering everybody on. They're all super nice. They're like my best friends not at school."

As for Paul, he's enjoying the time he gets to spend with Kate.

"It's a dream to fish with your kids," said Paul, who also hunts and shoots clay targets with Kate. "Whether it's a boy or a girl, it doesn't matter."

"It's more about the kids for me now. I think it's the same for Harry (Miller) and his grandson Mason (Jackson). It's fun to watch these kids learning and growing up."