

MAKING WAVES AT DCS



Dexter's Diving Dynamo – Lily Witte

When Lily Witte was 10 years old, a veteran Olympic diving coach took Lily and her parents aside and shared the following advice:

*"In order to compete at a high level in college and beyond, your kid will have to love the sport of diving for the next 15 or more years. Think about it—15 years is a long time, longer than she has been alive—but she must continue to love it. **She must be able to hold on to the joy that diving brings her right now, and dig down and find it when the going gets tough.** A vast majority of talented kids will not make it simply because they lose the joy or it has been extinguished by someone else. **Do not let anyone or anything ever extinguish the spark of joy diving brings her, including you, mom and dad.** Guard that fiercely, because once the joy is gone, the game is over."*

Lily's mother, Trudy Zedaker-Witte, considers this the best advice they have received over Lily's long diving career, which began when she was only 5 years old. The Witte family took that coach's words to heart, and committed themselves to ensure Lily had as "normal" a childhood as possible to help keep that spark alive. Rather than home-school or move to a city with more access to the wider diving community, the Witte family remained in Dexter and worked closely with Dexter Community Schools to allow Lily to continue her education while pursuing her passion for diving.

"We have always told her that diving will end for her someday," Trudy says, "whether that's at age 14 or 40. What you do now in school helps define who you will be for the next 50 or more years after diving is done." For Lily, going to "real" school was non-negotiable, and her goal has always been to walk across the stage with her classmates at graduation. As a senior at DHS who is also dual-enrolled at WCC, this dream is soon to be recognized come next June.

"I really don't know how she does it, as the majority of Team USA is homeschooled," Lily's mother shares, "but she makes it work."

Lily says balancing a "typical" teen life with her diving career is difficult at times, but it's so important to her that she makes it work. "It's such a cool experience to have a normal school life, but still be able to dive – it's a neat thing to have that balance." When she's not practicing or competing, Lily makes time to hang out with friends and attend high school activities like the Homecoming dance. One might think she misses a lot of school due to national and international competitions; Lily says it's really not that much, but sometimes it comes all at once. For example, she was recently in Montreal for the Fédération Internationale de Natation (International Swimming Federation) (FINA) World Junior Championships in Montreal (where she placed 3rd in the 3-meter), flew back to Dexter for a week of school, and is now at the University of West Virginia for the 2022 Winter Senior National Championships.

When asked how she handles this disruption to her school days, Lily shared, "Dexter Schools and my teachers have been great. They have always been very understanding of my schedule, and are continuously supportive and helpful." DHS teacher Ruth Hamilton, who has had Lily in class both her junior and senior years, says that when Lily knows she'll miss school she always lets her teachers know

well in advance and completes her assignments fully and on time. “She works really hard to stay on top of her work,” Hamilton says, “which I put down to grit, determination and excellent time management skills.”

“As a student, she is a pleasure to have in class,” Hamilton continues, “and it’s obvious she is really enjoying her senior year. More often than not I see her smiling and laughing in class, joking with her friends, and generally doing what most students in their senior year are doing - making the most of their time with their friends.”

Lily’s determination and ability to prioritize contribute to her not only staying caught up with her schoolwork, but to participate in milestone activities at DCS. “Of course, she can’t do everything,” her mother says, “but [together with the District] we find a way to make it happen.” When Lily started at Mill Creek Middle School, the longtime favorite 7th Grade Camp week happened to be just ten days before the Junior Pan-American games in Victoria, BC, where she would be representing the USA. It was impossible that she miss an entire week of practice right before an important competition, so DCS worked with the Wittes to create a schedule that worked for everyone. Lily was able to go to camp during the day, she was picked up in the afternoon for practice, then returned back to camp for the rest of the night. A similar situation occurred in 8th grade with the Washington DC class trip. Lily was scheduled to represent the USA in a competition in Germany, but also really wanted to go on the class trip. To make this work, she left the meet a day early and flew home just in time to go straight from DTW to catch the bus for DC.

“We are truly appreciative of Dexter Schools and how they have helped her chase her dreams,” Trudy shares. “The Dexter schools and community are part of the fabric that makes up Lily. It takes a village to make this work, and we are grateful Dexter schools have been partnering with us over the years.”

Dexter Community Schools is proud to call Lily a Dreadnaught!

Lily Witte Diving Highlights

- 2022 Junior World Championships team member (bronze, 3-meter; 14th 1-meter; 7th, synchronized 3-meter); unanimously named team captain by teammates & coaches;
- Six-time Junior National Champion (2022: 1-meter; 2019: 1-meter; 2018: 1-meter; 2017: 1-meter, 3-meter; 2016: 3-meter);
- Four-time Michigan State Champion – set the state record of 554.65 (more than 45 points higher than the previous mark);
- 2019 Junior Pan American Championships (4th, 1-meter; 6th, 3-meter);
- 2017 Junior Pan Am Championships team member.

(photos on next page)



Photos courtesy of Ryan Maki, Tammy Parker & Trudy Zedaker-Witte