

Christy Frikken: 2007 Skydiver of the Year

Christy Frikken is this magazine's 2007 Skydiver of the Year because she climbed to the upper strata of competitive skydiving while taking a whole bunch of her fellow jumpers with her.



Christy Frikken.

Becoming a world champion skydiver takes a full-time commitment. An aspiring competitor who's not training is working one way or another to pay for that training. Because most regular jobs can't accommodate an athlete who needs to spend most of his time at a DZ, competition skydivers tend to work at the DZ, where they coach, instruct or whatever.

A serious shortcoming of this arrangement is that it often effectively isolates the most skilled skydivers from the rest of the jumpers at the DZ.

When they're training, competitors typically get to the DZ early in the morning. They'll spend the rest of the day holed up in private team rooms, leaving only to knock out jumps and perhaps creep.

They rarely make fun jumps, and they're usually gone by early afternoon. They certainly don't

hang around for sunset beer.

And when they're coaching or instructing, competitors' interaction with most other jumpers on the DZ is limited.

Their relative isolation is understandable; they're focused on a difficult goal, one that takes 100% of their time, money and energy.

But this scenario does little to make the sport more rewarding for other jumpers on the DZ. Because the most skilled and confident jumpers aren't mixing it up with everyone else, the quality of everyone else's dives usually suffers.

Frikken showed it doesn't have to be this way. In the past several years, she devised, implemented and still oversees a panoply of programs at her home DZ that have torn down the wall between top 4-way FS competitors and everyone else.

At the same time, her own 4-way team, "Perris Fury," has worked its way to the upper levels of its discipline, finishing third at the 2007 Nationals with a 21.0 average.

While Frikken is getting a lot of help from others, particularly the other members of Fury and the DZ's management, it's clear her initiative and hard work are the catalyst that makes it all happen.

Frikken created structured programs at Perris that are open to any skydiver who wants to participate. Without going into detail, these programs offer opportunities for jumpers — be they newbies,



"Fury" on its way to altitude. From the left: Josh Hall, Chris Farina, Christy Frikken and Uli Stuwe.

weekenders or fledgling competitors — to polish their skills by jumping with members of Fury or being coached by them both in the air and in the DZ's wind tunnel. Some of the programs are free; the others are reasonably priced.

One example is the Fury 8-way project, created by Frikken and launched last year. An 8-way team formed at Perris around each member of Fury. Each team was comprised of jumpers with compatible skills and goals. A custom training schedule for each was mapped out before the season

began. And each team's training program culminated with competing in the 2007 Nationals.

The participants of the 8-way project loved it, and it's easy to see why. Over the course of five or six months each made well over 100 team jumps with player coach and six other dedicated cohorts, improving their skills and having a great time. It was great to not have to troll the DZ on a Sunday to make a few unrewarding pickup loads.

"She has managed to create, implement and oversee all these projects while training with Fury," one nominating letter said. "She is not only an asset to Perris but an asset and role model for skydivers everywhere — especially me!"

The letter — its author started jumping 18 months ago — continued: "Christy is very knowledgeable, always at the DZ and always

willing to help. Since before I got my license, she has frequently come up to me asking if I wanted to make a jump. No coaching fee, no covering her slot; just asking as if she were doing a fun jump with a friend.

"She's a wonderful organizer. She has brilliant ideas on fun, structured jumps and can execute them flawlessly," the letter continued. "And she's funny, too!"

That Frikken has extraordinary aerial skills is proven by the scores Fury posts. It's also obvious that she works hard as a full-time skydiver, but so do many others. The programs she's implemented certainly should be embraced and duplicated by other competitors and DZs, because they're winners for everyone involved.



A Fury-coached 8-way team on the hill over Perris Valley Skydiving in southern California.

The members of Fury's 8-way teams last year pose for the camera. All photographs by Niklas Daniel.

