



Christy Swaid: Backflip into the future

11/02/2026 As a jet ski champion, stuntwoman, and entrepreneur, Christy Swaid loves speed and precision and has a zest for life. Following a series of personal tragedies, a new world record turned her life around.

Christy Swaid climbs onto her jet ski, with her right knee on the deck, her left leg dangling in the water, and her hands gripping the handlebars. Bending her knees slightly and engaging all of her muscles, she applies the gas, stands up, and lifts the handlepole. To the roar of the engine, she zips through the surging spray along Lake Martin near Birmingham, Alabama, navigating the jet ski in a slalom motion and absorbing every wave with a quick shift of her body. She changes direction, turns circles, raises a triumphant fist into the air, and then heads back to the shore, gliding the last several meters. “For me, jet skiing is a feeling of pure happiness,” she explains with a huge smile, tossing her wet blond hair out of her face. “I love the water, the smell of gasoline, and the roar of engines. I need speed and physical challenges.”

From jet ski to the racecourse

It's this passion that has taken Christy Swaid to the top of this extraordinary sport. Her list of achievements includes six jet ski world championship titles and many other distinctions, which the 55-year-old acquired before getting married, when her name was still Christy Carlson. And Swaid is just as passionate about her sports cars. She climbs into her white Macan S when transporting jet skis by trailer or driving around with her two sons, but opts for an Arctic Grey 718 Boxster S that goes by the name Grace – the youngest family member in the garage – when driving to work, going shopping, or navigating the winding roads where she lives in Birmingham in the US state of Alabama.

Swaid purchased the roadster when she was visiting her eldest son, Christian, in California, where he is studying sports medicine at Pepperdine University. They often go on road trips along the coast and through the mountains and desert in his Cayenne.

When Swaid was having the SUV serviced at a dealership in spring 2025, she couldn't take her eyes off a 718 Boxster S. She was able to feel the engine right behind her and control the manual six-speed transmission during the test-drive, which was quite a thrill.

Speed limits prevent her from giving free rein to her passion for speed though. To do that, she has to take Grace to the nearby Porsche Track Experience (PTX) at Barber Motorsports Park, an official Porsche motorsport school. Just under four kilometers in length, the racecourse with challenging curves provides her with the opportunity to take full advantage of the Boxster's potential, find the racing line, and enjoy the vehicle's precision and the control she commands over it.

She shoots over the finish line at full speed, briefly slows down, and then puts the pedal to the metal as she begins the next lap. Swaid is all about top speeds – whether it's on land or water.

Her journey to the top

Even at a young age, she was dreaming about Porsche.

And her dream almost came true when she won her first jet ski world championship at the age of 19 and a sponsor offered her a used model in place of the money. She was thrilled by the idea, but her father declined the offer. "He chose the money," explains the world champion. "Back then, I thought that was so boring, but the money is still in a separate account." She inherited her business sense from her father, Richard Carlson, who was a pioneer in jet ski rental in the 1970s.

At that time, Christy was living with her mother and two older brothers in Chicago. Her parents had divorced when she was five years old. In the summer, the kids would help with their father's store in Florida and spend every free minute racing around on jet skis themselves. It wasn't long before Christy was able to keep up with her brothers. She competed in her first race at the age of 13 and clinched her

first win two years later. Sponsors began to take notice of her. She spent the last year of high school traveling back and forth between school in Chicago and weekend training in California. She competed in her first professional race on May 28, 1989 – and won. "I shocked the world and even myself," she recalls.

From that point onward, Christy Carlson dominated the competition as the Blonde Bombshell. As jet ski races became more popular, sports channel ESPN began broadcasting them live. She made a name for herself with her six world championship titles, was offered endorsement deals and hosting gigs, and became a stuntwoman for series like *Baywatch* and for movies. "Jet skiing was my calling," she says. "Anything else would've been more difficult. But this door was wide open."

A new start

For the world champion, nothing in life is a coincidence. Her mother, Carol Jean Yunker, taught her Bible verses when she was just a girl and they continue to guide her to this day. She also shares the Christian faith and a love of precision with her husband, neurosurgeon Dr. Swaid N. Swaid. For a life with him, Christy gave up a career in jet skiing and stunt work at the age of 30. She got married and moved to Alabama. Before her sons, Christian and Cason, were born, Christy Swaid founded the nonprofit organization HEAL United. The acronym stands for Healthy Eating, Active Living, and promotes a healthy life style for children. An idea initially conceived in the living room has evolved into an organization supported by the US state of Alabama, with fitness and nutrition programs that reach around 45,000 students at more than 220 public schools.

And then there was the pandemic in 2020, which proved to be one of the most difficult years of her life. Swaid's mother, with whom she spoke on a daily basis, died unexpectedly, followed soon thereafter by her former coach and then her father. With her sons just about to start college, Swaid had little time to mourn and ultimately sank into a slump. What eventually pulled her out in 2024 was a chance encounter with a jet ski backflip expert, who encouraged her to attempt the ambitious stunt. Swaid didn't have to think twice. "At that time, I was filled with anxiety and felt like a prisoner in a cage of fear," she says. "So, I had to do something courageous to break free." The backflip calls for completely different skills from what she had learned, which was to drive as fast as possible over waves, rivers, and lakes. This stunt requires exact control of two levers – to jump vertically and then flip backwards. Word spread fast among watersport fans in the US that Swaid was planning to attempt it. By the time she arrived on June 13, 2024, numerous curious spectators had gathered at Lake Mitchell to the south of Birmingham.

The first three attempts quickly failed, and during the fourth, part of the throttle lever impaled her left leg. The next few attempts led to further injuries, but her team encouraged her to keep trying. And then, during the 10th attempt, the jet ski lifted off the sweet spot of the boat wake, barreled straight up, and rotated backwards, with Swaid and her jet ski flying upside down through the air and landing back in the correct position on the water. The spectators cheered. Swaid was exhausted and covered in blood and bruises, but happy. "I'm so glad I didn't give up. It was worth all the effort." To top it all off, she was

entered into the Guinness World Records as the oldest person – at the age of 53 – to backward somersault on a personal watercraft.

This stunt marked the beginning of a new phase of her life, with Swaid founding a new organization, Checkered Flag Living, which is not just about physical fitness, but also mental health. It's easier to heal 10 broken bones than a broken soul, she says. For her, the Boxster symbolizes more carefree joy in her everyday life. Her new life's motto: "Live as if the next lap just might be your best."

Info

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Consumption data

718 Boxster S (WLTP)*: Fuel consumption combined: 10.4 – 9.6 l/100 km; CO_2 emissions combined: 235 – 218 g/km; CO_2 class: G

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all

sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

Image Sublines

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Title: Christy Swaid, jet ski champion, stuntwoman, entrepreneur, 718 Boxster S, 2025, Porsche AG
Subline: Boxster love: Christy Swaid couldn't resist her new 718.

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Title: Christy Swaid, jet ski champion, stuntwoman, entrepreneur, Macan S, Lake Martin, 2025, Porsche AG
Subline: September 2025: Christy Swaid at a photo shoot at Lake Martin. She also appreciates the quiet moments when she takes her jet skis out.

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