

Wake Nation opens this weekend

Fairfield park is only cable wake park in region.

By Corey Gibson, Contributing writer

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Summer is coming a little early this year for wakeboarding fans. Wake Nation, the area's first and only cable wake park, is opening its doors, and 10-acre lake, this Saturday.

For those not familiar with wakeboarding, it is essentially a combination of water skiing and snowboarding. The rider straps his or her feet into harnesses and is then pulled, by a boat or, such as at Wake Nation, a cable, pulling the rider around the water at a speed of around 20 mph. Wake Nation officials say that wakeboarding is the fastest growing water sport in America and that Wake Nation is one of only eight venues in the country to offer cable wakeboarding.

The history behind a cable park in Ohio is interesting. Bill Mefford, public relations manager for Wake Nation, said that Pete Kennedy, co-owner of Wake Nation, was on a trip in the Philippines when he noticed a small group of children waiting to get into a cable wake park.

"Kennedy went and watched the kids wakeboard, and he was totally sold on the idea," Mefford said. "And the U.S. only had a few cable parks, mostly in Florida, and he decided to try and build one in Ohio. And it worked."

Wake Nation encourages people to come in large groups, because multiple people can ride on the lake at one time. The park also boasts an observation deck for those a little too timid to take a whirl around the lake. And the park also provides free parking and free admission to everyone, meaning you only have to pay to ride. Watching is free.

If the lake looks a little overwhelming for the beginning rider, a smaller, half-acre practice pond with an "easy start" system is available for younger riders and people who are just learning how to ride.

"It is a practice pond," Mefford said, "which is not part of the 10-acre lake. You get to work with the staff and you go much slower and it is simply an up-and-back situation. It lets people learn how to get their balance."

For the veteran kneeboarders, wakeboarders, waterskiers and wakeskaters, Wake Nation has a plethora of obstacles to ride. Rails, boxes, A-frames and kickers are just some of the "rideable" objects scattered across the lake.

"A large island in the middle of the lake keeps the water smooth, or buttery as they say in the trade," Mefford said. "It keeps the water always smooth. And on the outside ring of the island are seven obstacles in the water, which the riders challenge."

In between runs on the lake, everyone has the chance to grab lunch at the concession stand or check out all the latest gear, accessories, boards and clothing inside the pro shop. Avid wakeboarders can

find the latest merchandise from big-name industries like Liquid Force and Fox, or they can opt for the some of the more local companies such as Water Monsters, a wake skate company based out of Cincinnati.

Wake Nation also offers a variety of other ways to enjoy the lake with birthday party specials, boat lessons, cable lessons, board repairs and a summer camp for children ages 8 to 16 starting June 5.

“It is neat to see the people in Joyce Park stop and lean over the fence and watch this crazy activity going on,” Mefford said. “And there is no boat. No polluting boat going around the lake.”

The park will be open at 10 a.m. Saturday for anyone to come test the waters. Riders with no experience to seasoned veterans of the sport are welcome to ride the cables, only a bathing suit is required.

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