

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Contacts**

Abbey Goers, Marketing Communications, 715-232-2565

Marketing Communications, 715-232-2381

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**UW-Stout student Luke Bousley to compete in Underwater Hockey World Championships**

*With first game set for July 21 in Australia, technology education major is living his lifelong dream*

[Story Link](https://www.uwstout.edu/about-us/news-center/uw-stout-student-luke-bousley-compete-underwater-hockey-world-championships)

**Photos attached**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Menomonie, Wis. – Luke Bousley has always been comfortable in the water. He started swimming at a very young age – his first memory of the pool was at the Door County YMCA with his parents.

On Tuesday, July 18, Bousley will jump into a much larger pool as the youngest member of the U.S. elite men’s team, competing in the [21st Underwater Hockey World Championships](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2F21stuwhworlds.com%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cgoersab%40uwstout.edu%7Cf25e7615c2fb445d850208db7e3995e0%7Cb71a81a32f9543819b89c62343a66052%7C0%7C0%7C638242558010853900%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=092wUxhk6LYnJAhkehRMAKiECVJ4H2qJGqPZf1EA4SQ%3D&reserved=0). Thirty-eight teams from fifteen nations will face off at the Gold Coast Aquatic Centre, in Brisbane, Australia.

Bousley, a [technology education](https://www.uwstout.edu/programs/bs-technology-education) student from Sturgeon Bay, calls underwater hockey “the ultimate sport.”

Players battle six-on-six through two 15-minute halves over a weighted puck at the bottom of a pool, at a depth of about 6½ feet. With no air tanks, only diving masks, snorkels and fins, players hold their breath while slashing the puck along with short one-handed sticks. If they need air, snorkels allow competitors to keep an eye on the game before quickly diving back under to rejoin the fray.

Unlike ice hockey, however, players do not have designated positions, and there is no goalie. They cover zones – forward, midfield and back. Bousley plays as a wing in the midfield on the sides of the team’s formations.

“I work as an offensive and defensive player. I assist the forwards in pushing up the pool and the backs in defending counterattacks. It’s a very fun position because I get to do a little bit of everything,” he said.

The U.S. is sending four teams to compete, one in each division: elite women, elite men, masters women and masters men. The elite men’s first game versus Great Britain is scheduled for 8:08 a.m. Saturday, July 22, or 5:08 p.m. on Friday, July 21, Central Standard Time.

“This team is at the highest level of competition and performance in this sport and is made up of the best-performing 12 individuals from throughout the United States,” Bousley said.

All games will be streamed live on the [championship website](https://21stuwhworlds.com/homepage/tournament-details/game-coverage/) and available for playback via the [Underwater Hockey Australia](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4dHs8nn8_yXcg6v0o9St4w/featured) YouTube channel. Bousley will share his journey on his [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/lbousleyuwh?mibextid=LQQJ4d) and [Instagram page](https://instagram.com/lukeuwh?igshid=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ==).

**Beginning his UWH journey**

Bousley first heard about underwater hockey six years ago while at a swimming practice from his now-coach Kendall Banks, a veteran of 39 U.S. national championships and 13 world championships.

Banks came to a practice at the YMCA, explained underwater hockey and said that he and his wife, Sue, were starting a junior co-ed program. Bousley went to the first practice.

“I absolutely loved it,” he said. “My first thought was, ‘Wow, this is way better than swimming laps.’ I started playing in the program on a regular basis and have not stopped since. The thing I love the most about the sport is the people I meet and the common connection we all share. We’re a very close community because we all go to tournaments together and play a very unique sport. It’s a sport that not a lot of people have heard about, but it is growing in the United States.”

When three of his teammates were selected to compete on the U.S. women’s junior team at the 2017 World Championships, Bousley told himself, “I am going to do that someday.”

He advanced to playing with the Sturgeon Bay club team and eventually started playing in tournaments in Milwaukee, Marquette, Mich., Denver, Colo., Orlando and Los Angeles.

For the past year, he has trained extensively, with early morning and late-night practices in the pool five days a week, including weekend scrimmages at the University of Minnesota.

Since September, he has played in tournaments and attended training events and national team tryouts across the country. On March 19, at a tryout in Denver, Bousley was named to the national team.

The elite men’s coach, Ian Curtain, and team captain, Ben Holtzman, have been to several World Championships and have a lot of experience leading teams, Bousley said. The team has been training together since March during weekends in Denver, Washington, D.C., and Lake Tahoe, Nev.

**Prepared, ready and proud to play**

Bousley is very excited to play at the World Championships. “It’s a goal that I have been working at since I was 13,” he said. “I feel ready. I think jumping in the water and playing will be an amazing experience and one I will never forget. I felt really proud making it as the youngest member of the team. It is truly a testament to my hard work and dedication and my support system that helped me try out and make the team.”

He is inspired by his goals, his love for the sport and his team. “What I would say to young athletes would be, find a sport you love and pursue it. Set high goals for yourself and go for them. You will have setbacks and things that slow you down, but those are all part of the process. Most of all, enjoy the journey,” he said.

He prepares for each game in many different ways, from warming up his body and lungs with swimming and underwater breath-holding sets, to making sure he is mentally ready to play at his highest level and finishing with puck work while visualizing game situations.

Bousley left for the World Championships on July 14. The team will practice for three days before the tournament. The final game will be held on Sunday, July 30.

**Support along the way**

As a full-time student, making the team was not easy. “It required a tremendous amount of time, dedication and commitment,” Bousley said. “This was a big financial commitment to fly, usually just for the weekend to these destinations. On a typical weekend, I flew out right after class on Friday and returned prior to my 8 a.m. class on Monday.”

Bousley’s travels are mostly self-funded. He works on campus with [Stout Adventures](https://www.uwstout.edu/life-stout/recreation/stout-adventures) outdoor program, leading student trips, and helping at the climbing wall and challenge course.

In January, an anonymous group of donors provided him with a scholarship to cover his travel expenses to and from national team events and tournaments.

He has started a [GoFundMe campaign](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgofund.me%2Fddf85970&data=05%7C01%7Cgoersab%40uwstout.edu%7Cf25e7615c2fb445d850208db7e3995e0%7Cb71a81a32f9543819b89c62343a66052%7C0%7C0%7C638242558010853900%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=kFtORmQtCRD8hZ4SkMd3QkQ5JYY3aNNAIR94R0B3wn0%3D&reserved=0) for donors to support expenses not covered by his scholarship, including his Team USA uniforms and gear, food and unanticipated expenses on his travels.

“I am humbled by the support I’ve received up to this point and am grateful for your support and generosity as I pursue this lifelong dream,” he said.

Bousley will be a junior this fall and will graduate in the fall of 2024. He plans to teach high school technology education in the Midwest.

“I would love to use my skills that I have learned being on the national team to start a high school underwater hockey team in the future,” he said.

*UW-Stout is*[*Wisconsin’s Polytechnic University*](https://www.uwstout.edu/about-us/our-polytechnic-advantage)*, with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes. Learn more via the*[*FOCUS2030*](https://www.uwstout.edu/focus-2030-plan-initiatives)*strategic plan.*

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**Photos**

Luke Bousley is the youngest member of the 2023 U.S. elite men’s underwater hockey team. Photo contributed by Luke Bousley.

Luke Bousley in his Team U.S.A. Underwater Hockey jacket. Photo contributed by Luke Bousley.

Luke Bousley first heard about underwater hockey six years ago. Photo contributed by Luke Bousley.

Luke Bousley (second from right) with the 2023 U.S. elite men’s underwater hockey team. Photo contributed by Luke Bousley.