

**THE BELOW CONTENT IS STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 20:00
MONDAY 8TH JANUARY 2024**

**DANCING ON ICE
SERIES 16
PRESS PACK**

**IF USED, PLEASE INCLUDE A
CREDIT FOR TX WHICH WILL BE
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RYAN THOMAS

What made you want to take on the challenge?

It was like it was fate. The week before I got the phone call my 15-year-old daughter had just out of the blue said to me “Dad will you do Dancing on Ice?” It was so random when she said it to me and I had just said “Maybe one day Scarlett”. A week later I got a phone call from my agent saying would I like to do it! It wasn’t even a discussion, I immediately said “I want to do it”. Of all of the shows it’s the one I’ve always wanted to do. I love skating, there’s something about it that I really enjoy. I’m so happy that I got the phone call and I’m onboard for this series.

What did your family and friends think when they found out that you'd signed up?

They were really happy because they know how much I like skating. I've never skated professionally before or anything, I just do it at Christmas and growing up as a kid, we used to play a bit of roller hockey. I don't know where that confidence came from to be on the ice but they were really happy for me.

So you're not coming into this as a complete novice, you've got quite a bit of ice skating history?

Just a little bit of the basics. I’m confident on the ice to the point where I can stand up on two feet and I can skate forwards. Since I've been with the coaches, I feel like I'm going back to basics again. It's like serious homework. It's quite frustrating because you don't feel like your hands and your feet and your head and your eyes all go in the same direction! I'm getting a lot of stick for having a short attention span in coaching lessons. When I do focus, it's quite good but it doesn't last very long!

On a scale of Todd Carty crashing off the side of the rink to Nile Wilson, where are you?

Oh my God, we always talk about Todd Carty! I think I’m in the middle somewhere. The problem is I'm not a gymnast like Nile, and I’m really not a dancer. I realise the show's called Dancing on Ice so I've had a bit of a nightmare really, haven't I? I'm hoping if I do enough skating I don't have to dance!

Have you learned anything from Adam’s journey on Strictly Come Dancing that you might apply to Dancing on Ice?

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What I've learned is persistence. Putting yourself out of your comfort zone isn't necessarily a comfortable place to be but he's been nothing but positive about his experience on Strictly. If I get half of what he got out of this, then I'll be happy.

Do you know any previous contestants who you can ask for advice?

I know loads of people who have done the show before. I've been to see Kimberly Wyatt do it - she's a good friend of mine. I've seen Sally Dynevor do it. For her to do it, the first time she's probably stepped outside of Corrie, was a big thing for her. I was really proud of her doing it. Brooke Vincent's done it. Obviously my best friend Chris Fountain set the bar high. I don't know if I'm being biased, but I think he's the best I've ever seen on the show. I've actually been going on the ice with Chris! We've just had a bit of fun together and just see if he can guide me and help me in any way. He's been at my house in the living room holding my hand doing dance routines, then my partner walks in and she says, "What the hell are you both doing?" I'm getting some backstage tips from the man himself! He's my secret weapon!

Do you feel like you've got anything to prove?

I've got something to prove to myself that I can actually learn and improve. I'd like to do my daughter proud because she thinks I'll be good on the show. She's put a lot of pressure on me now! It's always nice to show your kids that you can do well. I think my son will find it quite magical. He likes skating with his little penguin at our local rink. He loves going down there. I think he will really enjoy it and that'd be nice to see my son have fun and take part in something I do.

What's your biggest fear about taking part in the show?

Falling over is a big fear because it's one thing being on two feet, but it's another thing being on a pair of blades on ice. There's no room for error. If you get one foot wrong, you're going over. I wouldn't like to do a Gemma Collins - that looked like it hurt!

Have you had any nasty falls in training?

Not yet, no. But I've had little ones and I wake up and I do feel it. It's like landing on concrete, no different. My body has taken a bit of punishment so far but nothing too bad.

What was your first day on the ice like?

The first day on the ice, I was with Torvill and Dean and it was amazing because I got to play tag with Christopher Dean! But then your nerves get the better of you

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because you're all wobbly knowing you're in the presence of greatness of two people that own the ice rink, they're gods in that game. It puts added pressure on, but just to play tag on the ice with Christopher Dean was pretty magical. I was going forwards and he was going backwards and he was still going faster than me!

Has training been tougher than you thought it would be?

There are ups and downs. You have moments where you think, "Oh, I've got this." Most of the time it's hard work as you really are having to learn every step. You really have to put the time in to get the basics right so you can move onto the next level. Now and again, your feet will just do it without you even thinking about it. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Everything just feels uncomfortable at the moment. I don't feel I'm in my comfort zone. I'd like to get to a point where I'm a little bit comfortable.

What kind of teacher does your professional partner need to be to get the best out of you?

She's got to have a little bit of patience with me because I'm quite hard work and I've got a very short attention span! I've told her that she can work me hard. I really want to keep improving!

How do you feel about partner work?

It's not really something I'm thinking about. I'm just hoping I can actually dance well. I hope she doesn't look down at me and think, "Oh my God, I've got my work cut out here." It's a lot of pressure because these are pros at the end of the day. I want to make sure that I'm not holding her back too much. I don't want to get her to be frustrated with me. I just want to make sure that I can keep up and then try and make a routine work. At the moment there's a long way to go!

What did you think when you saw who you'd be up against?

For me it's not being up against them, it's more about, am I going to get on with them? That's something I'd really love more than anything. As long as we get on very well, that's all that matters to me. I'm not just saying it, they're all such lovely people, really down to earth, really supportive. I've had a lot of texts back and forth with them. Everyone's telling me how they're getting on. We're all bigging each other up. That's all you ask for.

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Would you say you are competitive?

I don't think I am. And then I feel like a show like this brings out the competitive side as time goes on. At the moment it's not competitive, no. I feel like the dynamic changes as the competition goes on, doesn't it? I'm competing against myself. And I want to make sure that I actually get somewhere in the competition because I want to know that I can actually do it. It's about making myself and my kids proud more than anything else.

Are you fearless on the ice, are you ready to take risks?

Yeah, that's one thing I've got in my favour, I'm fearless, I don't care about doing anything. The only thing I'm worried about is dropping my partner, which would be a nightmare because there's a lot of responsibility held in my hands, literally. And if I dropped her, then I can't see it ending well either. I'm nervous of that. But apparently they can give you a body bag that weighs the same amount as her body. I can get used to throwing a body bag around rather than her! So any falls I have won't be with her. I've got to give all the big lifts a go, right? I've got to make sure that I actually throw myself into all this and I will challenge myself. And I'm definitely not holding back on doing any of the lifts. This is fighting talk!

How are you feeling about the costumes?

Love it, love it. I love it. The tighter the better! The only thing is I'll be putting a sock down there because it's cold on the ice! I don't care about colours, I don't care about skirts, I don't care about leotards. You put me in it, baby, I'll wear it! Listen, I love dressing up. It's about playing a character and it's the only time you're going to get away with it. I'm all up for all that.

Do you think you'll cope with being critiqued by the judges every week?

Love them all. It is what it is. You're there to be critiqued, aren't you? They're going to give you a hard time. You might get a few good comments and you strive for validation when you do these competitions. You just need to take on board what they're saying.

Did Adam give you any advice for dealing with the judges?

He says it's going to be a nightmare! I mean, listen, he's shown me hard work pays off and you come out of the other side stronger and more positive about yourself. As one brother finishes another has to start!

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Have you given any thought to how far you think you'll get in the competition or are you taking it week by week?

It's going to be a tough one because everyone's progressed very quickly on this. I've seen a few videos of Greg Rutherford and his partner on the floor doing some mad little move. And I was like, "okay, competition's already high". You're talking athletes, you're talking sportsmen, you're talking dedicated people. I'm telling you, everyone's up for this. You've just got to just stay in your own lane and work hard. You want to take it seriously, you want to make sure you're learning and you're doing well and you're doing yourself proud but at the same time, it's about entertaining the audience and you want to make sure that you're enjoying it as well.

Will loads of your celeb mates come down to support you every weekend?

I'm hoping they'll all come down. I went to Strictly twice in two weeks just to let him know he's got to come and support me! It's been a long time since I've been in Corrie. I don't know if the Corrie fans even remember me anymore but I hope they will support me on the show.

ENDS

EDDIE 'THE EAGLE' EDWARDS

What made you want to take on the challenge?

I had a phone call saying that somebody had broken their ankle on Dancing on Ice and would I like to take part in the show. I was thinking, "Oh, shall I? Shall I?" I thought it was way too late because people had already started training. I decided, "yeah, why not? Give it a go. It's worth a challenge". I like the fact that I'm way behind everybody and I've got to catch up. I like that kind of thing. I decided to jump in and try and help out, as it were.

Was there any element of nerves?

Not really. Skating is not an easy sport to do. The ice is very, very hard. It's very easy to fall over. I'm not surprised. I always knew that if I ever did Dancing on Ice, it would be one of the toughest shows because it is dangerous. I don't want to hurt myself. I certainly don't want to hurt my partner. There's always that challenge but that's part of the challenge of it, really. Yes, I'm still nervous but I won't let that stop me trying to be the best skater that I can be.

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What did your family and friends think when they found out you were taking part in the new series?

They said, "Oh, you'll be great because you're a skier." I said, "No, it's a completely different sport." There's a lot of pressure now that everybody thinks I'm going to be a really, really good skater. I'm a really, really bad skater at the moment! It's a completely different sport. When I ski I automatically get myself into a certain stance. That stance is not a good stance for skating which is why I keep falling on my face because I'm used to arching my back and going forwards. They said, "No, you've got to stand upright and straight." Even that side of things is really difficult. The balance helps a little bit because I can balance left and right. With skates, you've got to balance left, right, forward, backwards, everywhere, it's completely different. It's like going back to basics.

Do you have any skating experience?

I took the girls when they were little. I took them to a nativity ice skating rink maybe 12 years ago. I can probably count on one hand the amount of times I've been skating over the last 50 years.

On a scale of Todd Carty crashing off the side of the rink to Nile Wilson, where are you?

I'm a little bit behind Todd Carty, I think! A little bit behind but I'm catching up with him up very quickly. I'm going to bring the fun element to my routine if I can. I've got a funny concentration face. When I'm concentrating, I stick my tongue out as well which is not a very nice look!

Is it true you can dance too?

I do Modern Jive. I've been doing that for 15 years or so. That's how I met my partner, going jiving. It keeps me fit. It's my social life as well as my fitness. I might bring a bit of jive to the ice and I was thinking about taking my skates along to class and dancing with my skates on to see if it's something really different. I might do that and see how that goes. If it goes okay then I'll let my skating partner know and see if we can introduce a few jive moves while we are skating. Although that sounds like it could be carnage!

Do you feel like you've got anything to prove?

No, not really. I'm now the oldest person in the show by quite a margin. I guess I'm going to just fly the flag of the 60s plus and say, "We are not on the scrap heap yet. We're going to be just as fit and strong and agile as the 30-somethings." I don't want

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to put too much pressure on myself. I could go out in the first round. I could fall flat on my face and that'll be it.

Have you got any fears about taking on this challenge?

Lots. I don't want to hurt myself because I don't want to miss out on all my other things like my dancing and my skiing and everything else. I have to be a little bit careful. People say, "Oh, you're a skier. You should be able to skate easily." It's just not the same at all. There's all that pressure of those expectations. I'm trying not to think about it. I'm just going to have some fun. I've still got a lot of catching up to do. I might feel a little bit more confident in another few weeks but at the moment, no, I'm not very confident at all.

What was your first day on the ice like?

It was tough. It was just the concentration of trying to balance and trying to move your feet and move your skates and not take them off the ice and trying to put one skate in front of the other, which is really hard. I felt like Bambi on ice, really. It was very strange. I was amazed just how mentally tired I get after just a couple of hours on the ice. I wasn't expecting that at all. The physical side I expected anyway because my legs get quite sore, especially my knees. I'm always extending and bending my knees when I'm skating. I expected my thighs and my knees to be sore. I didn't expect to get so tired after just a couple of hours on the ice. Once I've gone off and had a cup of coffee and maybe had a sandwich or something and relaxed a little bit, then I can get back on the ice and do another session. The recovery is quite quick!

What kind of teacher does your partner need to be to bring the best out in you?

A bit of a carrot-and-stick approach, really. Be kind and gentle but kick my ass when I need it, I suppose. If it's hammer, hammer, hammer, then I sometimes start to think, "Ooh." I get bored. If it is a carrot-and-stick approach, then I work better like that.

Do you think the athlete in you will come out during this process?

Yes but also my dancing. Up until about a year ago, I was dancing five or six nights a week. My fitness levels were really, really good. The fitness side should be okay. Mental side is very, very difficult with that concentration but that will get better. Flexibility, I'm okay. I'm not brilliant, but I do keep as flexible as possible, bearing in mind, I'm 60 now. Everything else should be fine, I think.

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How do you feel about partner work?

When I do competitions, some of the ladies I do competition dancing with, we've got to get really close. I'm quite used to being really close when I'm dancing. I did the Southwest Championships and the Welsh Championships in Modern Jive. I think we came second in the Welsh Championships for the over-50s. Now I'm trying to combine skating with dancing, I just hope it won't be carnage!

What did you think when you saw your fellow skaters?

I don't want to think about my competition, I just want to concentrate on myself and improve my dancing. From the ones I've seen and heard about, I'm thinking, "Oh, my god, this is going to be a really tough competition." I've seen little clips, or my partner has, on the internet, like Greg Rutherford. He's looking really good now on skates and lifting his partner. They're much further ahead at the moment. That's the challenge, really. I try not to let it affect me too much!

Would you describe yourself as a competitive person?

I used to be very competitive but probably over the last 20 years, I'm just not competitive anymore, nowhere near like I used to be. I just go out and enjoy it and have fun doing things. When I did Splash!, I'd never really dived before. I amazed myself how I got on with that. I thought it'd be great just to get past the first round. I never thought I would not only get to the final but win the first series of Splash!. That was amazing. I only went on it to have a bit of fun and see what I could do. It was great.

Are you fearless?

I think that's where I might have a slight edge on everybody else because I will go for it. If I want to do a jump and try to do a full circle in the air, I will go for it. Whereas I think some of the others might think, "I'm not sure if I'll do that," I like to just throw myself into it. Once I've done one or two and I get used to that feeling, I'll be well away then. I think that will give me a slight edge. I am not fearless but less fearful than a lot of other people. I'm up for doing lifts like the headbanger. I think my partner will have to be a lot more braver than I am because I'm the one lifting her. I just hope I don't drop her! I would not like to hurt her at all. I'm excited about what we can do together.

Are you going to embrace the sequins, the Lycra, the spray tans?

Oh, yes. I do love a tan! I'm quite looking forward to getting a spray tan. They can cover me in anything they want, feathers, whatever. Pink is my favourite colour. I

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love pink. If I wear something that looks silly and put a smile on people's faces, then I'm up for that. It'd be great fun. They can stretch the boundaries and stretch their imagination. Let's see what we can do to make things really fun.

How do you think you'll cope with the judges' comments?

I've been critiqued all my life in just about everything I do. That won't affect me. I do love constructive criticism. I'm not going to be the best skater by a long way. It'll be good to get the criticism as long as it's constructive, I'll take that on board and improve the following week as long as I don't go out. It's like water off a duck's back for me.

Who's going to be coming down to support you?

I'm hoping my partner, definitely, my family and I've got plenty of friends who want to come down. I'll have plenty of support, hopefully.

ENDS

GREG RUTHERFORD MBE

What made you want to take on the challenge?

Madness, stupidity! No, for me, I love the challenge and I thought, "It's about time I do another challenge. It's been so long now." I loved ice skating as a kid, it was actually 25 to 30 years ago that I was skating. It was quite a long time ago. I used to love watching ice hockey. I used to be a big fan. We had a local team that we'd go and watch every week, so, I thought, "Why not? It'd be a brilliant challenge. It gives me a good reason to train." I'm really looking forward to it actually.

What did your family and friends think when they found out?

It was just like, "Here he goes. What's his new thing? Oh, of course, it's Dancing on Ice". They're always expecting me to come up with something and then here we are, we're going into 2024 and it's now ice skating hopefully for up to nine weeks or so. They're all really supportive. My friends and family know exactly what I'm like and they like the fact that I want to push myself.

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Were you just a fan or did you actually take part in ice hockey as a kid?

No, I was just a fan. My older brother played a little bit of ice hockey for the local club. I never played ice hockey at all but I used to just skate a bit. We'd go watch the games, then they'd have the free ice periods, you'd go and do a little bit of ice skating afterwards. I have skated before, but we're not talking about twizzles or anything like that. When I came on the show, I was like, "I'd love to learn how to skate backwards." I never learned anything like that as a kid. I can confirm I can now skate backwards and it's a great feeling and I really enjoy it.

On a scale of Todd Carty crashing off the side of the rink to Nile Wilson, where are you?

With all these things I always say, "I just don't want to be the first one to go." Now, of course, everyone expects because I'm a former sportsman that I'm going to be highly competitive and whatever else. Now, what I always say with that is I know what I'm good at in life and what I'm not good at! I'm competitive when I feel like I can be competitive and I will be a little bit competitive with this one, but how far I go, we shall see. We are already doing things that apparently are quite advanced which is quite nice. I want to say, middle to Nile, that's where we need to be. That'd be the plan anyway. If I could get in and around there, that would be brilliant because I'm thoroughly enjoying it. We are doing some really cool stuff already and we've only been together a little while.

Do you know anybody that's done the show before that you could just call up for advice on what to expect?

I've spoken to a couple of people. Denise Van Outen being one. I also know Wes Nelson as well but I'm yet to have a conversation with him about it yet. I need to actually reach out and ask because obviously he did really well on the show. Do you know what is really interesting? With Strictly, I enjoyed elements of it, whereas with Dancing On Ice I absolutely love all of it. I'm so excited to get back on the ice every day. It's a very different feeling, I'm really enjoying it. It's brilliant.

With your Strictly experience and your experience as an athlete, do you think expectations might be quite high for you?

I fear that it's going to be high, yes, but there is absolutely zero crossover. There's also no crossover from the sport that I did. The big thing, again, anybody that's ever done sport, there is always a thing of, you'll be good at this because it's a sport. Well, yes and no. Just because you can speak doesn't mean you can speak every language in the world! There always are expectations. I know I'm still relatively strong, so I can do lifts above the head already. So I think that there is a lot of

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expectation, but whether or not that comes out in performance is another thing. We'll see.

Did anything you learnt on Strictly Come Dancing, come back for you in terms of the performance side of dancing?

Maybe a little bit with the hands actually just mindful of where my hands are going while I'm skating and then in particular moves that are similar. There are aspects of it which I think maybe aren't as alien to me because I have done this in Strictly. The lifts and everything are so much more different because you've got blades on your feet, so that makes things a little more tricky. I've been training as much as you're allowed to train to improve and I can feel that improvement, which is really, really important and nice for me. I think the difference from day one when I started to where I am already within a few weeks, I feel so much better about it.

What was it like meeting Torvill and Dean for the first time on the ice?

I went for it on that day massively. Of course I took a tumble, which was a bit of an eye-opener because it hurt! From my point of view, I got a little bit ahead of myself, I was having a great time as well, really going for it, playing silly games as a group. Then I hit the deck and it was one of those situations and they say you just suddenly realise, "Oh good lord, this is actually where it can be quite dangerous and most certainly can be quite painful". You have to respect it, but it was great. I got to meet two absolute legends of British sport and I'd never met them before. I was really keen to meet them because I grew up really loving watching winter sports. I wasn't born when they won, but they are still synonymous with winter sports in the UK.

When you fell over, was your ego bruised as well as your body?

I think the good thing about being a former professional sportsman is that you are used to things going wrong - failing and picking yourself back up. It's one of those things and I laughed it off. Falling, hurting yourself, having to pick yourself back up, that's all what part of this show is about and I'm very happy and comfortable with spending a bit of time on my bum, to be honest!

What's it been like working with Vanessa and what kind of teacher does she need to be to bring the best out in you?

First and foremost, she's amazing and an incredibly lovely, wonderful human. I feel genuinely privileged to have her because we're talking about somebody who is an absolute legend within the world of figure skating. She is incredible. I feel very lucky to be around her. I'm having a really good time with her and we are genuinely laughing a lot, getting loads of work done but also having a bit of fun. I'm a chatty

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person and often she's there going, "Right, come on now, we've got to do some more work, stop talking." But we have a really good time doing it and she's a brilliant coach.

How do you feel about working with a partner?

I think I was really fortunate because obviously when I did do Strictly, you are in a very similar situation. It takes a bit of getting used to but it starts to become really normal. It's really interesting because obviously the form of the human body, you're trying to find those points which then becomes your anchor point. When we're trying to move around, you want to be able to get the hold. If I'm holding her in the right position I can move, she can move. It's a bit of a puzzle in there which is quite interesting as well. You stop thinking about it because for them it's so normal and they don't make it weird. That's the thing, I think if the pros made it weird for you, it would be significantly more difficult. But they're great. It's brilliant.

What did you think when you saw your fellow skaters?

I was a big fan of Ricky Hatton as a boxer. Still to this day, I'm a big fan of his, obviously one of the UK's greatest ever boxers which is an amazing thing for me to then be around. Meeting him, I was quite starstruck, to be honest. I got a photograph on the first day. I very rarely do that but I went to see his last ever professional fight, so for me, he was a really big deal. It was a real shame that with Stephen having to leave the show, I felt really bad for him. I'm really interested to see what Eddie The Eagle is like on the ice. He's another absolute winter sports legend.

Everyone is saying you're pushing the competitive edge on the show, is that fair?

On day one, I could see straight away what these guys were doing because when we all met up and the fellas are going, "Oh, you've been doing this, you can do blah, blah," because I had said I'd skated as a kid, I feel like they're trying to palm some of the pressure onto me which is fine because I happily accept it and take pressure on because I enjoy that. I feel like Ryan in particular, he definitely could skate a bit beforehand. In the masterclass, he started doing some backwards moves that I couldn't do, he kept that really quiet! I think Ryan is a good skater. Lou Sanders as well, she's come from roller skating and she's very good at that. I've already seen bits of Miles skating and I can see that he's becoming a good skater. The great thing about the show is it is a bit of a leveler. As much as I had skated a bit as a child, I'd skated in some hockey skates at the age of seven, it's very different to having toe picks on and trying to skate backwards and doing lifts. I've never done anything like that and I have no reference points for that. All I had a reference point for was going

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forward but I couldn't even stop. Competing for me is second nature and you'll see how others respond to it. But so far, everybody has been really lovely.

Might we see you doing the headbanger and really pushing it in terms of lifts?

I said when I came on the show that I wanted to do something that's never been done before. Vanessa is game for that as well. I would say I'm relatively fearless, I love anything that pushes you to the edge. With this, I fear more for my partner. I don't want to get it wrong for her sake. That's where I get slightly concerned. I'm going to push it and I'm going to work incredibly hard to do things that have never been done before. We are already in discussions about trying to do something in show one that has never been seen or never been attempted before. But I don't know yet, that all might change. The thing is with that, I say I want to do something that's never been done before. We are going to try and aim for something at some point, but it might be that if we last a couple of weeks, then we roll it out. I don't know how that will go. I want to do well. I don't want to hurt Vanessa, of course, so I'll still be cautious. I think she's one of the most fearless people I've ever met in my life. She does not worry herself about anything that I'm about to do which is great.

Are you prepared for the Lycra, the fluorescent colours, the sequins and the spray tans?

It's been a few years since I had a spray tan but I'm definitely looking forward to that! If you sign up to do this show and you're concerned about a bit of makeup and an outfit, then you're in the wrong show. For me, I was really excited about the prospect of all that. I want the outfits to be as loud as they need to be and I want to get fully involved in everything. Dress me up, do whatever you like. I'm here to have some fun as well. As much as it's a competition and I think everybody expects me to be really full on because of it, I'm here to have fun. I'm learning an amazing skill. I'm spending some time with a wonderful human that's Vanessa. Of all the shows I've done, Masterchef is the one for me that I took so much from because I cook every day now and I love it. What I want to do from this is take away the skill of being very good at ice skating so forevermore I can turn up to an ice rink and skate well. Take my kids skating and teach them, that's what I want to take from this.

Will you take the judge's comments in your stride?

Yes, of course. Fundamentally, they're there to try and help you. I'm quite lucky I spent my entire life being told by other people how to get better. And often that's telling you that what you're doing is wrong or needs to be improved. I'm very, very good with taking criticism and generally constructive criticism. If someone just doesn't like the way I look as a human, that's a bit different. I'll take all that on board and try to do well. I'm by no means going to be a great skater, but I'm going to try

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incredibly hard and I'm going to work my very best in order to be as good as I can be.

Who will be supporting you each week?

Rob Rinder is coming down. We did Strictly together and then never in a million years did I think that he would become one of my best friends. He's my middle son's godfather. We hit it off that much. He's a really important part of the family. He's very key. He loves ice skating, actually, so Rob is going to be somebody that's down probably every week! I'm looking forward to that. I think Susie, my partner, will come down most weeks as well. And then we'll see how much more space I can blag, basically.

Are you thinking about how far you want to make it in the competition or are you going to take it week by week?

It is a bit of taking it week by week. Now, I say I'm trying really hard and I'm trying to learn as many skills as possible, and every single day Vanessa tries something new with me which is great. I think we can have a lot in our arsenal to sort of pull out whenever we need. I don't know how well everybody else can do. I don't know if people are going to want to vote for me. Of course, I hope they do. I don't know if the judges are going to like me, but I want to try and do some amazing lifts. I've said that I want to learn to jump and turn as well which I think would be cool and a bit different as well. I hope I last and stay a long time. If not, at least I've worked as hard as I possibly can. I just don't want to be in the first skate off! But I'm not taking any of that for granted whatsoever.

ENDS

CLAIRE SWEENEY

What made you say yes to Dancing On Ice?

I love watching the show. I'm a fan of the show. I've had quite a few friends who've done it who've absolutely loved the experience, and I wanted to get a skater's bum for Christmas! I look at what The Vivienne lost, like nearly four stone. How wonderful to learn a new skill, get a really fit body, and you know what? As you get older, you get a bit more fearful and you get a bit more cautious. To really conquer something that is terrifying is wonderful.

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What did your family and friends think when you told them you were doing it?

They were all scared for me. They were like, "Oh, be careful. Be careful." The Vivienne just said to me it's the best thing she's ever done. Mollie [Gallagher], who's in Corrie, said she mourned it when it finished. She was so devastated when it finished. She loved it.

Lots of Corrie stars have done the show, have you asked them for advice?

I've been talking a lot to Mollie and I've been chatting to Samia [Longchambon] as well, which has been really helpful.

Have you done any skating before?

No - I'm a complete novice. Literally starting from scratch. I do go at Christmas but I tend to cling onto a penguin. I'm not very good. I've just mastered going backwards, which I can't believe. For me, that's like winning the lottery, being able to skate backwards.

On a scale of Todd Carty crashing off the side of the rink to Nile Wilson, where are you?

I'd put myself at a two at the moment. I'm being honest. I've spent years faking it from the waist up. When I was in Chicago and other shows, I've faked it from the waist up for years but I don't think you can do that with skating because you'll be on your bum. I can make nice shapes from the waist up but it's the feet down. At the end of the day, if you can't get over the fear, that's the hard part.

People will say that your background in theatre is an advantage?

It's like learning a new language. It doesn't matter how many shapes you can make from the waist up, if you're scared, and I'm not lying, I get scared but then something kicks in and I enjoy it. I just really want to enjoy it. My character Cassie, in Corrie, is so drab - I'm looking forward to wearing sequins and sparkles on a Sunday night. To me, it's all about the music as well. We get great music and we get to get glammed up. It's exciting and I learn a new skill too.

Are you going to embrace the sequin, the Lycra, the big hair?

Oh my God, yeah absolutely. Nothing is too much! The Vivienne was wonderful last year. And she couldn't do anything at the beginning, like me, so she's a bit of an inspiration for me.

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Do you feel like you have anything to prove?

That I can stay up! Do you know the thing that excites me most? You know when you go on those rinks at Christmas, to be able to skate in front of my son. There's a new rink in Battersea Power Station and to be able to skate in front of my son and actually be able to do it properly, I'm looking forward to that.

What was your first day on the ice like?

Wow. You'll love this one. We meet Torvill and Dean and they stand in the middle of the ice and say "Welcome." You've got to make your way out to them in this huge ice rink. So I'm kind of like Bambi. I skate, but then I go bang and I take a really hard fall. I got back up and I thought the main thing here is to carry on, to keep my confidence. If I can carry on, that will be a big achievement for me. So I get up and I carry on. I'm really proud of myself and I carry on for half an hour. Then they thank me and get off the ice and I get to my dressing room. I'm trying to be cool. I get in the dressing room and I'm hyperventilating and then I catch myself in the mirror and my leggings are ripped from the top of my bum to the bottom. I'd been skating around with my bum hanging out! Literally my bum hanging out. I just thought I've got to own this!

Has anything surprised you about the physical side of training for the show that perhaps you didn't anticipate?

I think there's a lot of training that goes into it and it's the power of the mind. There's so much about your mind. I'm not going to lie, when Stephen from Gogglebox had that accident, it set me back. I got scared. I'm the same age as Stephen. I got scared. When you get a bit older, you don't bounce up so quick and I think it's really set me back in my mind!

How have you got yourself through that then, to keep pushing on when you're scared?

I've been training in really busy rinks and that scared me with loads of people everywhere. Then I trained in a smaller rink, early in the morning which was empty and it was lovely. I've got my confidence back here and I started to enjoy it. When I enjoy it, I get this sense of euphoria that just goes from the tips of my toes to the tips of my fingers. It's a sense of excitement and euphoria. When I get that, if I keep that and I enjoy that, whatever I do, I'll be happy.

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What kind of teacher does your professional partner need to be to bring the best out in you?

We need to have laughter. I've been working with a great coach and he's got me through because he makes me laugh. Laughter, fun, I need someone not to just whip me into shape. I need to be told, I need a bit of an alpha male dominating me, telling me what to do. Otherwise, I'll just be wanting to chat and find excuses. Like when you're doing your homework, when you're a kid and you keep finding excuses not to.

What did you make when you saw the rest of the celeb lineup?

I know Ryan Thomas and I've met Roxy before. I know Amber. I'm a big fan of Ricky Hatton. I did dance for Comic Relief with Ricky years ago. So I was pleased when I saw the lineup. Ryan was skating backwards on the first day and stopping, as was Greg Rutherford. A lot of them I felt had an advantage but I can't let that get in the way. I've got to do my own journey. I'd turn up to training and I'd see Miles before me spinning on the spot and stuff. I'm literally just managing to stand up and I just thought, "I can't think about that. I've just got to do my own journey". Just do my own thing and ignore what's going on around me.

Are you a competitive person?

Here's the thing. At the moment I'm thinking I've just got to get through it safely but I know when I get into it, I'll start getting competitive.

Are you going to push yourself and take on the lifts like the head banger?

At the moment, I'm saying no to the head banger. I'm still traumatised by Bonnie Langford banging her head. I've spent a year wearing an Invisalign on my teeth and I don't want to be getting my teeth knocked out!

How are you feeling about being critiqued week on week by the judges?

I'm not bothered about that because I don't know what I'm doing. I'm learning from scratch, so you can only learn from the critique. These people are the best at what they do, so I'd be a fool not to listen to them. It's a kind, nurturing, feel good show. Whatever they say is going to be with our best interest at heart and you just can't take it personally. You just listen to it and go, "Okay, they've got a good note there." I'm used to taking notes on set. We take notes on stage and you get directed. Someone sitting giving you notes can be nothing but good for you.

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Is there a particular judge that you want to impress the most?

I think for me, if Torvill and Dean gave me a compliment, I grew up watching them in the Olympics, I'm that era. If they were to give me a compliment, I think that would mean a lot to me.

Who are you going to have supporting you every week?

My little boy, Jackson, hopefully. Denise Van Outen said she'd come with Duncan James which is nice. I think The Vivienne might come. My mum hopefully.

Do you hope the Corrie fans will support you and vote?

My character is a bit unpleasant at times, so I don't know how that'll affect me with the judging and voting! With my character everything comes from good but then things go wrong for her!

ENDS

RICKY HATTON MBE

Why did you decide to sign up to Dancing On Ice?

I just thought it was a new challenge for me. I've always liked a challenge. I mean, I'm pretty fearless. I think you have to be being a boxer, don't you? I've never been shy of a challenge. It's well-documented a few years ago, I wasn't in a very good place. But since then everything's moving forward and positive in my life. I think a few years ago, I probably wouldn't have been in a position and I'd have said no. When it came forward this time, I jumped at the chance and I'm thoroughly enjoying it.

What did your family and friends think when you told them you were doing the show?

They all thought it was crackers because I can't dance on a solid floor, so I don't know how I'm going to do it on ice! But it was great. The reaction of my kids, Millie and Fearne, they watched the show and they went, "Oh my God, dad. Oh honestly, are you dad? Can't wait for this. Don't go embarrassing us, dad." That fills you with confidence, doesn't it?

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Have you done any skating before this?

No, none at all. I'm a hundred percent novice! To be honest with you, when I look around at some of the people that are on it and obviously I know a couple like Claire Sweeney and Ryan Thomas, who's always been a good friend of mine. It's a nice, great family atmosphere now. Everyone's really nice, everyone that's taking part in it. Even the team that are running it. It's been really good. I'm going round to a few people like Ryan and Claire saying, "Have you ever done any skating before? Because I haven't." And they're like, "No, I've never done any before either." And I'm looking at them, and I'm thinking, "They have!" They're ahead of me for definite. I'm going, "Ryan, come on Ryan, don't lie to me now. Come on." He went, "Well, I have done a little bit of roller skating when I was younger." When I went to the masterclass, that was my first time on the ice. I'm not saying I'm going to be doing a few flips today but from where I've come, from that masterclass to now, I've come on a hell of a lot!

How would you rate your ability on the ice on a scale of Todd Carty crashing off the side to Nile Wilson who won last year?

I don't think I'm in a position to win it but I think I'm in a good position that a lot of people will get a lot of laughs - they know I'm never scared of having a laugh at myself. I'm a little bit fearless and I love a challenge. When I told people I was going on, like my family and close friends, their jaws hit the floor, "You're not going on ice skating, why?" And I went, "Well, it's a challenge." People just shake their heads in disbelief. It's my job to go out and prove them wrong, I guess.

Do you feel like you've got anything to prove?

I'm having a laugh but I want to do as well as I can. I've never done anything by halves. I have gone in for a laugh and I think people are going to be laughing their bellies off, to be honest with you but I'll be giving my best. From where I've come from a few years back, I was in a really bad place and when people see me doing positive things like the documentary, the exhibition and now Dancing on Ice. Because I'm an ambassador for mental health it's inspiring a lot of people. And a lot of people are going, "Oh, my God," laughing their heads off but the majority of people are going, "Fair play to you, Rick. Where you were a few years ago ..." And that's what it's all about as well, isn't it?

How do you think the nerves of stepping out live in front of the nation on an ice rink will compare to stepping out into the ring?

People say, "If you're stepping out into the boxing ring, you've got to have a lot of courage." You've got to have courage, haven't you? That's what it is, to get in the

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boxing ring. If you look at it from that point of view, people say, "Oh, you'll be alright. You're used to getting into the ring in front of thousands and millions of people watching at home and having a fight. So going on the ice shouldn't really be a problem." It sounds dead easy when you look at it from that point of view, doesn't it? But I never felt more comfortable than when I was in a boxing ring and I've never felt more awkward than when I am on that ice rink. I'm overcoming some fears. Of course it is nerve wracking in a boxing match. Getting in the boxing ring, fighting another person. It goes without saying. I'm not used to being on the ice rink. I think my nerves will probably be a lot worse than when I was fighting, to be honest with you. You have got people that will say, "Oh, you'll be able to hold it together, being a boxer." I'd probably say the opposite.

What was your first day on the ice like?

It was very nerve wracking to be honest with you. I signed up for the show because I was excited, looking forward to it and up for the challenge but I didn't anticipate what that first step on the ice would be like. I stepped on the ice and I slid all over the show. I thought, "Have I taken on a little bit more than I can chew here?" To dance on the ice and to twist and turn, and lift and stuff like that, when I'm thinking to myself, wow, I can't even walk here. I'm a long way away from where I think some of the contestants are already at but I'm enjoying it and there's a lot of satisfaction when you're out of your comfort zone. I've seen how much I've improved in such a short space of time. It's very pleasing really. When I get to the ice, I don't feel nervous when I get on. I look forward to it and when I first went on the ice at the masterclass, I thought, "Oh, this is going to end in tears. Have I taken on more than I can chew?" But no, I think I'm going to do half all right.

Has anything surprised you about training that you perhaps didn't expect?

You think it's about balance and stuff like that, which it is, getting your confidence on the ice but it's like on your skates, you turn around and go on the inside of the blade, go on the outside of the blade, don't catch your toe. You've got to bend your knees and go on the inside, on your left knee. Then on your right knee, you've got to straighten, go on the outside, there's a lot more to it than just keeping your balance and twirling round. All you have to do is get the wrong lean on the skates and you're on your arse!

Have you had any nasty falls in training yet?

I've not done that badly because of my upper body strength, due to me boxing, I've always been able to stay on my feet and keep myself balanced. I know a few people have fallen over more than me and I think it's that fear. I think if you're going to fall over, fall over, get used to falling over. Half the fear is not hurting yourself. I think it's

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the fear of falling over, making yourself look an idiot, isn't it? But if that's the case, you've got to accept the fact that you're going to fall here and there. You need to do that in order to get the technique right. If you're tensing and you can't get the technique right because you're worried about falling, then you're never going to get it right, are you? It is what it is. You've just got to accept it. If you fall, you fall. You don't, you don't. I feel like I've fallen more lately because the better I've been doing the more I've been able to be a bit more adventurous.

You're partnered with Robin Johnstone, what's she like?

She's great. She came to the gym and did a bit of boxing with me, a bit of pad work and stuff like that.

What kind of teacher does she need to be to get the best out of you?

I think she's got to be patient, because that's what I find as a boxing trainer. You've got to realise that if you've got a youngster in front of you and they're just starting off and they've never done it before. Even though I'm a bit of a perfectionist in the boxing ring, I think I've got to understand as a trainer, and I'm hoping Robin's going to be the same with me. I think it's got to go in stages. It's like anything you do, isn't it? Doing it, repeating it every day, whether it be boxing, whether it be ice skating, whether it be acting, where you're learning. You're remembering your lines, remembering your scenes, remembering your combinations for your boxing, remembering your tactics on the football pitch. The more you do it, the more you can train, the more you can do it day in, day out, the better you'll be.

How do you feel about working alongside a skating partner?

I've basically just been concentrating on keeping my balance. I think the only thing that's given me a little bit of confidence is that if I do miss a stride, she'll pull me back into place. She's only little but she can pack a fair punch, so she won't have any problems holding me up!

What did you think when you saw the rest of the lineup?

I thought they were all lovely at that masterclass. Bear in mind it's a competition. It didn't feel like a competition. It felt a little bit like a family. They were geeing me on, "Go on Rick, you can do it." And everything like that. It was really good. And there's a few there that you thought they were pros, the way they're doing it. I've always liked the challenge and I think whatever happens from here on in, I think I've met some nice new friends.

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Are you feeling competitive?

I am competitive but I'm known as a bit of a Jack the lad and a practical joker. I will be competitive. I feel I will make a few balls up, as they say, along the way. And if I do make a balls up, steam won't be coming out my ears. I won't be swinging for anyone, trying to knock them out. I'll make it funny. I'll laugh at it, but I will be competitive. It's one thing about being competitive but if you mess up, well you mess up, you've got to make it funny, you've got to make it entertaining. I wouldn't want to put my TV on and have every contestant be serious and competitive. Wouldn't be much entertainment value, would there?

Are you fearless and ready to take on some of the big lifts?

Part of my game when I was boxing, I was very strong, very stocky, very strong and powerful. I like to think I'd be able to lift her but it's being able to do. Your balance has got to be right, that's the key. My balance has been good over the last few weeks now, so I'd like to think I'd cope pretty good with it.

Are you going to embrace the Lycra, all the sequins and the spray tans?

That's the last of my worries at the minute to be honest with you! But if you have seen me box, the shorts had sequins and frills on. My shorts were down past my knees, I had baggy shorts on and stuff like that. I always used to come out wearing something wild, so I'm not bothered about what they want me to wear. As long as it's not red - I'm a Manchester City fan, so I refuse to wear any red! There's lots of things to look forward to - what the clothes are going to look like, what song I'm going to be dancing to. It's exciting because depending on how good Robin feels my ability on the ice is, will depend on how fast the song is, I'm guessing.

How are you feeling about the judges and being critiqued every week?

I'm not worried about the judging, to be honest. It's going to be hard enough on the ice as it is, so I don't want to be worrying about the judges as well. I think it's only going to add more stress to the situation. Judges will do what they do. All I can do is the best I can do.

What was it like meeting Torvill and Dean?

That was fantastic! I'd met them before actually but it was fantastic to be speaking to the proper legends of the sport. You don't even have to be an ice skating follower to be a fan of Torvill and Dean - absolute legends of the sport. When we were at the masterclass with them, for them to give me a little bit of advice and a little bit of help, it was brilliant. If you had said a few years ago, would I be ice skating, I'd have said

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no. Would I be on the ice and being coached by Torvill and Dean, would I be on the ice in front of television, in front of millions of people? I wouldn't have believed it. As hard as it is and as difficult as it is, and as much as it is an effort, I'm loving every minute.

Have you got lots of celeb mates that are going to be coming down on Sunday night to support you?

Yeah, a few of them have been phoning me and going, "Oh Rick, how are you doing?" Joe Calzaghe went on Strictly and even he said to me, "Oh, it's great. You'll love it Rick. And even if you mess up, they can pull you back into place." I went, "How did you find the ice, Joe? He said, "No, I never went on the ice. I just went on the dancing one. Are you on the ice?" I went, "Yeah." He went, "Oh, you're in trouble!" So that's another confidence booster from some of my friends! But yeah, I've got a few that might come down and watch. I don't know who yet, it depends on what work they've got on and I don't really know the exact dates yet. There might be a few surprises!

ENDS

AMBER DAVIES

What made you sign up to Dancing On Ice?

I didn't think an opportunity like this would present itself, especially because I haven't been on telly for so many years. I thought that ship had sailed. But when the producers pulled me in for a meeting, they solely recognised me as a musical theatre performer. And for me, I was like, "Oh, that's so lovely." I don't feel like opportunities like this come around often, at my age, to learn a brand new skill from scratch. I love pushing my mind and pushing my body, and because I have trained in dancing, I was so intrigued to see if any of it's the same. And actually, although the terminology in the language is the same, it's not the same on ice. It's not. I really feel like I'm learning a new skill.

Has that been a shock to the system to realise that actually you've got to forget all your dance training and start again?

Yes because in my mind I thought it's got to be similar but it's not - it's the polar opposite. In dancing, all of your legs have to be pointed and turned out, where here a lot of it you have to do with a sickle foot, that's been drilled out of me - never sickle your foot. And now I'm having to introduce it, it's so alien.

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What did your family and friends think when they found out you were doing the show?

My mum nearly had a heart attack because obviously when you sign up to a skating show there is danger involved. And with me being on stage every day, I think there were just alarm bells in her head like, "Oh my God, this could go terribly wrong." But I just think if you have that narrative throughout life, you'll never do anything. I want to do this. I know my body well enough to look after myself mentally and physically. I keep sending my family videos, they can actually see from afar that I'm getting more confident. I think every day they're getting more and more confident with me being on the ice.

Have you got any skating experience?

I would say before my masterclass, I'd skated a handful of times in my life. I got to about 14 where I was like, "Mum, I actually really do want to be on the stage." And as soon as that decision was made, I wasn't allowed to go skiing. I wasn't allowed to go ice skating just in case it jeopardised my training in musical theatre. One of my biggest memories from secondary school is all of my year going on a skiing trip, and I was the only one that didn't go, and I had to go and spend the week with the year below me and it was just like the biggest FOMO ever. Now I look back and my mum was doing it for the greater good.

On a scale of Todd Carty crashing off the side of the rink to Nile Wilson, where are you?

It's really difficult because you see the other contestants at the masterclass and I don't know how I'm getting on. I don't know whether I'm forward or behind. With my instinct I feel like I'd say I'm mediocre. I wouldn't say I'm the worst and I'm definitely not the best because I still have the fear factor in my mind but I think I'd probably be sat in the middle.

Is there anyone you can turn to for advice about the show?

I've obviously got Kem - I text him a couple of times and he's given me some advice on bits and bobs but he did it so long ago. I'm surprised he even remembers! He just said, "It's all about confidence." I over complicate things in my mind and I'm a bit of a control freak. I can't just let go. Kem literally said to me, "You just need to relax." It's so hard to do that when you're on the ice because you're thinking about so many things. The more I get on the ice, the more relaxed I'm getting.

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Do you feel like you've got anything to prove?

Not really, no. The biggest competition is with myself. I just want to be better than I was last session. I feel like when we get to the live shows, I'll just want to be better than the week before. I guess the further I get in the competition, it will be more like, "I'm onto you, I'm getting you knocked out!" I think as I'm finding my feet now, I'm really just focused on myself and being better than I was yesterday. I just know the more that I do it, the more weeks that I get through, my competitive streak will come out. I know it will!

How do you think your nerves will compare to walking out in the Love Island Villa all those years ago?

I feel like as I get older, my nerves are getting worse because I care more. It's all about controlling your breathing and I need to ground myself. Nerves affect me quite a lot - I shake! My legs shake and that's not good on the ice. That's what I'm a little bit worried about. Even on opening night in Pretty Woman, my lip was shaking a tiny bit. My body trembles but I'm hoping that by the time the first week comes around, we would've run the routine so much that I'd be like, "Okay, I've got this." Also with nerves, you've got to be careful because adrenaline can make you a bit scatty. You'll push things that you don't need to push and then you over-dramatise from rehearsals because that's when things can go wrong. It is about remembering what I've done and staying grounded, basically.

What was your first day on the ice like?

I was terrible! I was pulling myself around with my upper body. I couldn't even move my own legs. I remember looking at the other contestants thinking, "Oh my gosh, I am really below average here." That put a bit of a fire up my arse. I thought, "I've really got to work hard here," because Adele, Lou, they were all a bit of a natural and they had a fearless streak in them and I was a bit more wary. Being around them on the ice made me push myself a little bit more. Now that I've met my pro, Simon, and we are together every day, even just having that relationship with him, I feel really safe with him. I will push myself but I was terrible - I was like Bambi when I first got on.

Has anything about the training for the show surprised you in any way?

When I was 16, I moved to London and I trained for three years at a drama school. I was doing 12 hours a day of dancing for three years. I feel like it's kind of tapping back into that. It's like you've got to discipline yourself and it just reminds me of that. I feel like I have to be so cautious about what I'm eating. I've eliminated alcohol

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completely. I have to eat to fuel myself but also I don't want to take it too seriously either. If I have a bad day, I have a bad day. It's reminding me of those three gruesome years I did training, though nothing will compare to that. I get a snippet of that every time I go on the ice.

When the show starts, what's happening with Pretty Woman?

I'm taking a break from Pretty Woman and I'll be solely focusing on Dancing on Ice.

What's Simon like to work with and what kind of teacher does he need to be to bring the best out in you?

I feel like Simon and I are very, very similar. We're very emotional. We care a lot and we share the same language because he's an ice dancer. If he was just an instructor, I feel like we'd clash because we don't speak the same language but we really, really are on the same wavelength. And he's just so easygoing. He pushes me - he's cruel but he's kind! He's so mindful of my schedule but he'll always push me in every session that we've done because I feel like he knows I've got it in me.

How are you feeling about partner work?

I'm so used to it. Every show that I've done, whether it's West End or tour, you have to have those connections. There's always some form of connection. So I don't even think about that at all.

Are you feeling any pressure that you've got to perform as you're a West End star?

Not really. Greg used to play ice hockey when he was younger, if anything I think he's the front-runner. Eddie the Eagle, he knows how to move on ice and in snow. I think anyone who has been introduced to ice skating from a young age, they would be the ones that are more of the front-runners. The only good thing is the performance aspect. I won't have to work on that as much as some of the other people but then again, they might be better on the ice anyway. I feel like it's a real fair playing field.

Are you quite fearless when it comes to being thrown around by Simon so you are happy to take on those big lifts?

I feel like I'm going to be more in my comfort zone in the air than I will be on the ice! I'm only five foot two. In partner work and stuff like that, it's always like, "Okay, go and pick Amber up because she's the easiest one." I'm used to being up in the air and I trust Simon wholeheartedly as well, I'm up for anything. I'm a bit of a daredevil.

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I don't think I'd be doing the show if I wasn't a daredevil. My mum wasn't surprised at all that I was doing it but I would love to get the headbanger out in the first week, I just don't know if they'll allow us because no one's done it. No one has done the headbanger in the first week. And I thought, "If anyone's going to do it, it's going to be me!"

Are you ready to embrace the Lycra, sequins and spray tans?

Yeah! I said the bigger, the better. The more sequins, the better. If there's feathers, stick them on! I want crazy hair, crazy makeup, things that I wouldn't do in my normal day-to-day life. I want to squeeze as much out of this experience as I possibly can because you don't know how long you're going to be in for. I want to get more dramatic and more wild as the weeks go along.

What was it like meeting Torvill and Dean for the first time?

The first time I met them both, Chris actually did a lift with me on the ice and I thought at that moment my life had peaked! They were so lovely, so humble, down to earth and Chris was having a bit of banter with me. I think he knew that we could have a bit of fun which was nice. He was making comments and I was thinking, "He knows that I can take it. That's why he's saying it." I feel like they have the same amount of time for everybody.

Will you be ok having to be critiqued by the judges every week?

I'm used to it because when you audition in musical theatre, you get more nos than you get a yes. The older I get, the more I have had to work on rejection and the fear of rejection because you could go into an audition and learn the songs and then basically they turn you away which is absolutely what happens half the time anyway. I feel like I'll take it as constructive and it won't touch a nerve as much.

Is there any particular judge that you want to impress the most?

I think Jayne, I love Jayne. She's just such a sweetheart, isn't she? And then Ashley Banjo. I feel like he's going to be a hard one to impress. I need to crack him down, get him under my spell. I feel like I'll be able to do that. I'll be like, "Please, give me the highest score you can give me!" I don't want them to be easy on me when they critique me, I want them to push me. I want them to be like, "We know you've got more in there." If I do a mediocre job, I want them to push me. Don't go easy on me. I can take it!

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Have you got a whole host of people that are going to come down on a Sunday night to support you?

Yes, my boyfriend will definitely be there. He's my number one fan. He's amazing. My mum will want to come but will want to watch through her hands! My dad will be there. My sister's actually on tour with Wicked, so it might be difficult to get her down. And my nana. I've got to get my nana, she's got to experience that.

Have you thought about how far you might get in the competition?

A couple of people have asked me this and I just think I'm taking every week as it comes because you just don't know because it's a public vote. You have no idea, do you? I'm going to push myself as hard as I can. I'd absolutely love to get to the end so I could do the Boléro. I'd love that more than anything but your fate's in the public's hands, really.

ENDS

HANNAH SPEARRITT

When you got the call asking you if you'd be interested in Dancing On Ice, what made you say yes?

I'd auditioned for it before, a few years ago. I came out of it feeling quite positive but then I fell pregnant so that didn't happen. I think it's one of those things where it's jumping into the unknown, hugely. When I auditioned for it this time there was such a positive, kind energy. When I went on the ice with Karen, she kind of sold me on it. I was like, "I've never been on the ice before, just at Christmas time, just hanging onto the rails." Literally within the 20 minutes I was on the ice with her I felt like I learned so much. It was amazing. I thought, "Bloody hell, if I can learn and progress that much in 20 minutes, imagine what I could do with more time."

What did your family and friends think when you told them you signed up?

My mum's always a bit like, "Oh Hannah, be careful!" Everyone else, when they found out, were just really happy for me.

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On a scale of Todd Carty crashing off the side of the rink to Nile Wilson, where are you?

Obviously I started at zero, so I don't know, maybe a two or a three! I call myself Bambi on ice. That's my nickname for myself. I've ordered a T-shirt with Bambi on! I think one of the biggest things is I want to just have fun with it because I think everybody learns better like that. It's difficult on the ice because you can't have too much fun, you have to focus, obviously. I'm sort of just doing it against myself, just wanting to be the best that I can be.

So you don't feel like you've got anything to prove?

No, because I think everybody's different. Everybody has their strengths and weaknesses. I don't think it's useful to try and prove anything. Other people might find that useful. To be honest, we may well get to a point on the show when it gets competitive but at the moment everyone is just really supportive.

What is your biggest fear about doing the show?

One of my biggest fears initially was hurting my partner. Just losing focus and catching him with my blade. It really worries me - having a terrible, terrible accident. Now I've started I'm not fearing that much at the minute. I've fallen so many times. I haven't hurt myself that bad, really. Maybe when I do fall and I really hurt myself, maybe that will become a fear. I am quite tentative so maybe there's a bit of fear.

What was your first day on the ice like?

Oh my goodness, all of a sudden I'll make these ridiculous sounds and just fall over! It's like I do something well and then I'll lose concentration and then do a silly fall. I was going so slow and holding on for dear life because it takes a while to really feel the ice but I've been really encouraged by the progression. On that first day I was thinking, "Oh, this is my worst day ever." It wasn't happening as quickly as I'd like it to but things can change so quickly and then you get a moment that does go well. I think it's a mindset. I don't really want to feel fear. I want to have the mindset that there's going to be huge challenges but that's part of the process. It's just taking those tiny wins of the day and moving forwards from there. I'm trying to not worry about how potentially dangerous it can be.

What kind of teacher does Andy need to be to bring the best out in you?

He's pushing me and he's working me hard but ultimately we're just having fun. We're having a good time when we're doing it. He's getting to know when to mix

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it up between the repetition you need to learn and then the breaks to have fun and relax. I think we're a very good match.

How do you feel about partner work?

When I started working with him I was nervous but more because I still felt like Bambi on ice wobbling everywhere. To actually start those partner moves and have that contact feels great. He's happily married. I'm happy in a relationship, so no ice curse here!

What did you think when you saw the rest of the line-up?

I think amongst the boys it's going to be competitive. I won't name names but there is one person that I think will get competitive - he's lovely! I'm sure it will get competitive with the girls a little bit but I think ultimately it will also be a very supportive place for everybody. I think everyone's starting from scratch and everyone's learning a new skill and it's nice to see other people progress.

Do you think you'll take on all the lifts and maybe consider the headbanger?

Yeah, absolutely. I love the lifts. We've tried a few already. In an ideal world he'd lift me throughout the whole routine but then I think the judges would be like, "Hannah, you didn't actually do any skating!" If I could get away with it, I would!

Are you going to embrace the Lycra, the sequins, the spray tans?

Oh my God, I can't wait! I don't want to be spun around in my tracksuit. I'm super excited about that. Yeah, bring it on!

How do you feel about being critiqued every week by the judges?

I don't think you can take it personally. You need to hear what you're doing badly so you can change and learn. I can feel when I do something right and I can feel when I do something wrong most of the time. Obviously there's bits that I can't because I'm not a skater, so I ask Andy what was wrong so that I can improve. I think they're quite kind in the way that they say it, it's helpful criticism. You have to hear that to improve.

Is there a particular judge that you want to impress the most?

Torvill and Dean because they are legends of the show and of the sport!

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Will you have lots of friends and family down at the rink to support you every Sunday?

Yeah, depending on how many tickets I'm allowed, there's a few people that want to come down. Obviously my family, my two little ones. Oh my God, I can't wait for that. We'll see how far I get, I don't know how many shows I'll be in!

ENDS

MILES NAZAIRE

Why did you want to do Dancing on Ice?

Honestly, it's one of those things where the skill of Dancing on Ice is just insane and I really, really want to have that added to my belt. Also, I think being in the TV industry and doing all this reality, you get this consensus of, "Oh, can they do anything more than just reality TV and drama and all that?" I think that's given me a little bit of a push to want to do something a bit more out there, something that you actually genuinely have to put work into. It's not just, "Oh, here we go. We're going to dance on ice and have a bit of fun." If you don't actually turn up, you can injure yourself, and it will show. I want to show that when I put my head into something, I really do actually train properly and do it properly.

Do you feel like you've got something to prove?

A hundred percent, actually. You get it all the time. "Miles this, Miles that." And I think for me, it's not just to prove to others but I think to myself as well to say, "Look, give me a challenge and I'll do it and I'll get it done." I think there's going to be two sides of me you're going to see. I think already one of those sides came out with Vanessa, which is really, really amazing. When you are paired with your dance partner, you need to see there's natural chemistry. I don't know if Vanessa takes it out of me or it's just I'm feeling really comfortable, but there's a side that I only show my mum and people who are very, very close to me, which is kind of like the kiddie side and just having a bit of more fun and not so serious and not so 'Miles the French boy' who talks in French and woos women. I really love it when I'm like that. I'm just a bit goofy and I'm just a little bit more myself. That side, I'm really excited to show because I think people don't get to see that at all. Also, I think the other side is genuinely just showing that I work hard in everything I do in life. I really do work hard and I want people to see that.

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What's your skating experience been like before starting the show?

I must admit, I skated when I was like eight years old. My eighth birthday, my parents brought me to the Queensway Ice Rink and I was holding on for dear life on the borders, just slipping everywhere. And then it's one of those things where, it's Christmas, you go to a rink, you'll have a cheeky little date and you're like, "Oh, let's go ice skating!" That is the extent of my ice skating.

On a scale of Todd Carty famously crashing off the side of the rink to Nile Wilson who won last year, where do you rate your ability?

I believe I'm progressing quite quickly. I don't want to sound arrogant in any way, but I feel like I'm going more towards Nile Wilson! I'm progressing rapidly. I learn quite quickly in just day-to-day things, anyway. This is something that I'm really loving. I just love being on the ice. It's also always at the end of the session where you really get in the flow of things so you want to do more.

Do you know anybody that's done the show before that you could ask for advice on what to expect?

Right now, I'm going in completely blind but I obviously know Perri from Diversity who did it. I am going to reach out and just maybe get a few pointers on what works. Vanessa asked me if I'd seen any of the dances, the choreography. I don't actually want to watch anything because I feel like if I start watching other people's performances from last year or the year before, I'm going to have an idea of what I think will look good or what I think the judges want to see. I kind of want to go in and go, "This is me. This is what we've learned over the last few weeks." Let's discover this together and learn the dance together and just go out there and have fun.

What was your biggest fear about taking on a challenge like this?

The fear of doing this live in front of people. I'm not a performer. You watch me on TV each week and it's in my comfort zone. The cameras, you barely notice they're there when they're filming us in Chelsea. You don't have a row of people sitting down cheering you on or looking at you and watching every move. This is something that scares me a little bit and I think that's what I'm going to have to focus on more, just really getting confident and performing in front of a crowd. Amber, for example, is in musical theatre, she's so used to this. I think that's where she will strive the most and I think that's what I'm going to have to work on, just really focus on that performance. I think that's what I'm quite scared of but I think as the weeks go on and you're more confident on the ice, it should be more natural.

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What was your first day on the ice like?

Awful! I was sliding all over the place. My boots were not done up properly. I remember Torvill and Dean were like, "Yeah, your boots are way too loose." So I went, "I don't know how to do them, right?" Thinking about where I am now is actually quite crazy. I have to admit, I'm really proud of myself. I've really put in the work over the last few weeks and it's definitely shown up and I'm excited.

What was it like meeting Torvill and Dean for the first time?

They were so lovely. I wasn't too sure what to expect. Obviously, they've been around for so long. And even my parents were like, "Oh, my god. How were they?" I felt a bit nervous when I was skating towards them. I was like, "Oh, my god. They're going to judge me and everything." But they're just so loving and just really want us to do well which is really nice. It makes it easier, there is less pressure on us. We're trying to show them how good we are. At the end of the day, they've got decades, years on their belt of doing this. For us, it's really amazing having them there and even small tips when we did our masterclasses, they come over and they show us a few things. That's just really cool. It was an absolute pleasure.

How are you feeling about being paired with Vanessa?

I love it. I think it's great. I think out of everyone, she's probably the person I've wanted the most. I've always said, when I started this journey, I want someone who is disciplined and strict, and everyone's been telling me that out of everyone, she's quite hard on you and she's got a certain way of getting things done. And I love it. I must admit, she's got a beautiful smile and she's super bubbly, but you can't run around and have fun. You've got to get the work done. And I think that's really good. And there's a good mix. We're having a good laugh. We're testing each other's boundaries and we're getting the work done. So yeah, I'm really happy.

How do you feel about partner work with Vanessa?

I feel like these sort of things, even with my coach before Vanessa, it's very much an art and a sport. Being tactile with someone who is new and dancing with them, you're learning. It doesn't feel weird. It's like, "Okay, you've got to put your hand on my waist here. You've got to do this." There's structure to the movement. Before we went on the ice the first day we met we did some little off-ice work and we did the Dirty Dancing lift! We did it really quickly and really well. Vanessa looked at me and went, "Oh, okay, you're quite strong." And then we did a few things and then she was like, "Oh, my god. This is really, really good. We're going to do this on the ice." In my head when we're doing that, I'm thinking, "Okay, I don't want to injure myself and I

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don't want to injure Vanessa." Being tactile with someone in this sport, it's also you're kind of thinking about safety as well.

Do you reckon we'll see you doing the head banger?

Yeah! We keep talking about this. I said to Vanessa that I want to surprise people, so let's learn some moves that no one's done yet and things that can be like, "Oh, wow. Okay, this is special". I don't want to say what we're thinking of doing but we definitely want to find things that haven't been done on the series yet and that we can perform and showcase. Vanessa said to me she didn't realise I was going to be so invested. I think that makes her job so much easier because then it means that when we're both on the ice, we're really in it with a goal to progress and to get better. It's just flowing really, really well. Even just us chatting and everything. It's great. It's a great pairing.

How are you feeling about the rest of the celebrity line-up?

I love a bit of friendly competition! I think what I love about everyone is that the first few masterclasses, we all felt like a bit of a family. But I also think we're all in it to get good and be good. Also, it is a competition! Greg, when he announced he was with Vanessa James, he did this little video of him with her, I then that day with my coach did the same move. And I put it on my Instagram and went, "Hi Greg, try this. I can do it as well." He loves it! He sent me a message like, "Oh, it's on now!" I think that's fun because it makes it lighthearted and it also pushes us. Greg is going to be the person that I think is competition. We've had a bit of banter online already, so I think we're going to have a bit of a tit-for-tat. It's going to be really good.

How are you feeling about the costumes you'll have to wear?

I can't wait. Put me in spandex all day. I'll wear a tutu if I have to!

How do you think you'll cope with criticism from the judges?

I feel like I do well with criticism. I think that's why Vanessa's so good for me. She'll tell me, "This is what we want to do. Be careful of this, don't do this and change around this." And I'm listening. I think the only time I'll fight back is if I personally feel like I've done well and they're saying, "Oh, this..." I don't know. I can't say anything now but I don't go too much on the defence. If I've done something wrong and I need to work on it, I'm ready to listen and work on it.

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Which of the judges do you want to impress the most?

To be fair, I just want to impress Torvill and Dean. Even with my coach before Vanessa, she was telling me certain things that they really like to see. I'm happy to do all the tricks and do the lifts and I think that's great, but my thing is the elegance and looking super smooth and fluid. I think if I nail those basics and look really, really sharp, and then on top of that I can do the lifts, that's what I'm kind of excited about.

Are you going to have lots of celeb mates supporting you on the show?

Hell, yeah! Everyone in the TV world that I know has been sending me lovely messages already and wishing me luck. All my boys from Chelsea, they're ready to be there every Sunday to watch me perform. They're really excited. They've really enjoyed the fact that I'm doing something like this as well. I've got a lot of support and I'm very lucky to have that.

Has anything surprised you about training for the show that you perhaps didn't anticipate?

I think just the amount of energy you need to use for this type of training. It's nothing like I've ever done. Training in the gym for two hours, it's easy for me. Training on ice for two hours is exhausting and it's a lot of work. It's also helped me train a different way in the gym as well, working on my core or working on my leg strength and all that kind of stuff. It's definitely different and I kind of love it because it's taking me away from the gym. It is crazy for me to take a break off the gym. I normally gym four or five times, well five or six times a week. Last week, I think I went three times. I've never had that. I kind of like it. It's actually made it way more relaxed, this kind of training which I kind of enjoy.

Will you have lots of other work commitments during the show or will you be solely focused on your ice training?

I've got lots of work on all the time but the work commitments that I have know that from January, I've got to really focus on this. I really want to do well. I want to go far. And I think the only way that's going to happen is if I put basically all my eggs in this basket and really just focus on Dancing On Ice. Chelsea knows as well that obviously, the priority for me right now is Dancing on Ice. I will be doing a little bit but I think solely focusing on Dancing On Ice.

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RICKY NORWOOD

When you got the call for Dancing on Ice, what made you say yes?

It just came at a time in life where it was just a great opportunity. I would normally say no to something like this, being on the ice in the cold, that's normally a no. The ice itself is unpredictable. You're dancing on blades, it can be dangerous and then the injuries as well. But none of that came into my mind. Once we had the chat, I pretty much said yes straight away. It just felt right. It came at the right time. Timing is everything. And it came at the right time when I was just like, "You know what? To do something that scares me, to do something that challenges me, to do something that is out of my comfort zone is a massive opportunity for growth." I was just like, "Let's do it. Why not?" It is going to be something that I'm going to have as a skill under my belt for years to come. We are doing very intense, very specific and very difficult stuff. By the time I finish this show, I'm going to be proficient. Hopefully, I'm going to be really good by the time this ends. And then you never know, if there's an acting role that needs me to be an ice skater, if they do a reboot of the Mighty Ducks or they do, I don't know, some ice skating drama, then let's go, it's in the bag!

What did your family and friends think when you told them you're doing the show?

They were all really shocked, because it came out of nowhere. It came out of nowhere and everybody was shocked but everybody's overjoyed and really excited for what's to come. They all want me to win, which I'm like, "Everyone just needs to back up a little bit. Everyone just needs to calm down, alright?" My mother-in-law has already set up the Sunday nights with her friends and they're going to have a different cuisine every week. They're going to sit down and watch the show with a bottle of wine. Everybody around me has been really happy that I'm taking part in the show and is excited to see what's to come.

In terms of skating, what's your experience?

Zero! I remember way back when I was a very little child being on the ice for about an hour or so, I can't really remember. But you're a kid, you're just on the ice, you're having fun at that moment, you're not thinking about anything. Pretty much zero - no roller skates, no inline skates, no skating at all. And I try to avoid the ice wherever I can. I don't even have ice in my drink.

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On a scale of Todd Carty crashing off the side of the rink to Nile Wilson, where are you?

Oh goodness, every day I'm getting better. I've been taking it one step at a time and really blocking out the voices in my head that tell me, "Well, you can't do this, you can't do that. You're not going to be able to turn like that." I've blocked all of that out. It is amazing how far I've come from day one masterclass and now dancing with my partner is a totally different ball game as well. I'm just really happy that every day we keep moving forward, we just keep taking one step forward. I'm really happy with where I am right now. Hopefully I can get towards Nile but I don't think I'm going to get to where Nile was. He was absolutely phenomenal and his gymnastics definitely came into play and you could see how working with another Olympian really pushed him last year. I'm just hoping to keep taking steps forward even when it comes down to the show. I don't care what my first week's score is, as long as the week after that is better and as long as the week after that it's better.

Do you feel like you've got anything to prove out there?

I don't know whether prove is the right word but I come from a performance background. Whenever I've been on stage, whether that be acting, dancing in a musical or whatever the case may be, whatever I've done, I always try and give a hundred percent. I always try to do things correctly. I want to make sure that come showtime, that whatever the routine is, it's done correctly. If I can do that then I've achieved something. I just want to make sure that I can put on a show, do the routine correctly, and then whatever follows I'll be a happy guy.

What was your first day on the ice like?

I think I've still got splinters in my nails from day one because I was hanging onto the side so often. I suddenly started to swear so much more than I normally do. I might need a swear jar! I remember at one point because there are a couple of the other skaters that are actually really good, and on day one they were really good and I was just like, "What am I doing it? Am I ever going to get it?" Do you know what I mean? After those first 30 hours of training I can go, "Okay, cool. Well, at least I'm not where I was on day one." The majority of the time on day one I was holding onto the side and every little exercise they asked us to do, I was like, "Are you for real? Is that what you actually want us to do? Okay, fine." I stayed so close to the barrier the whole day.

Have you had any nasty falls?

I've had loads. I think not so much nasty as in I've come away with an injury but I've come away with a bit of a sore shoulder. When I met Jayne and Chris, I dropped on

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day one, but I was like, "Yay, it's done now. I know how it feels. Alright, fine." When we're training on the ice rink during half-term and they had loads of little ones, and all of those dropped but they just bounced back up and they were carrying on skating. Falling is part of the game, falling helps you learn. You've got to get used to it. As long as there ain't no injuries, it is fine. Let's bounce back up and keep on going.

What was it like meeting Torvill and Dean for the first time?

Oh my gosh, I was a bit nervous. It's a bit mind-blowing. By the way, I'm saying Jayne and Chris not through disrespect because they told me I can't call them Torvill and Dean anymore. They were like, "We're Jayne and Chris now." It was nerve wracking but it was super exciting. They're lovely, lovely people and I still can't believe that I've had my first ever skating lesson by Jayne and Chris. How special is that? They are legends in this country and around the world. That Bolero that they did way back when still lives in the memory of so many people. They're just so good at what they do and they're lovely as people, it was a great day.

How is it working with a professional partner?

Annette, she's lovely, first and foremost. We have a giggle. She's tiny, she's light which is a good thing for all of the lifts! Working with her, she's been so good and so patient. Any questions that I've had to ask about where the weight is on this knee, on that knee or in this foot or in that foot, I'd be like, "Are we on the toe? Are we in the middle? Are we on the back of the foot?" She always takes time to explain it. We've been getting on awesomely. After our first session we went for lunch just to get to know each other. We spoke about music, we spoke about dance, we spoke about loads of different things just to get to know each other. I'm so lucky to have Annette as my partner. She comes into this show as a bit of a wild card as well because she's one of the new recruits. Not many people, the other skaters or the audience, know what she's going to bring to the table. Let me tell you, she works me very hard. She doesn't let me get away with anything. If I don't end up straightening my leg or bending my knees properly, she's like, "Ricky!" She's strict but we still can have a giggle when things go wrong. And she's very patient and she's lovely. I'm loving working with her.

What do you make of the rest of the lineup and how competitive do you think it's going to be?

It's a lovely bunch. I know Adele Roberts from years back, so it's great to be on this show with her. I think she's a wonder woman just in general with all the things health wise that she's had to battle and she'd done the marathon not so long ago. To see her and to be working in the same show as her, it's just a really special time. Day one, she got a lot more of the moves, but what really stood out to me was her

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elegance and her grace. Claire Sweeney as well, our paths have crossed over the years but it's been great to get to know her. Ricky Hatton, what a legend, watched him for years. I love a bit of boxing. To be in the room with him is just crazy.

Have you had any funny moments with the rest of the cast?

I think it was day one, we had to do a couple of the VTs where basically all the boys are just walking forward and it's a bit like Reservoir Dogs and the camera guys said to us, "We will do one serious and then we'll do one funny." We're walking down, we've got our serious faces on and the camera guy is speaking to us, he's like, "Okay guys, start nodding your head, start thinking about the competition." We're doing all that and then they're like, "Okay, now look at each other." Ricky Hatton was standing right next to me and as I've looked at him he gave me the stare, like the boxing stare off. At that moment I'm like, "Hey Ricky, what are you doing? Listen my friend, this is just a VT, we don't need to be that way, bro. We're just acting, this is just for fun, bro." We had a giggle with that. There is a competitive side to it. Miles is competitive. Ryan is phenomenal from day one. Greg the Olympian, absolutely ready for any competition going. When we'd done the games in the afternoon, we had to do a bit of a race, bit of a slalom, you hit the end and then you race back and he really wanted to win and went super fast. He ended up dropping really hard and then sliding for about 10 metres on his chest. There is definitely some competitive nature within the group.

Are you quite fearless and going to take on some of the big lifts, like the head banger?

I'm looking to avoid the head banger with every being of my body. I'm going to go in and try to do the best that I can do. If the coaches trust me to do something, if they think that I'm ready for a new move or something risky, then we can go with it and go for it. But the head banger, I don't want anything to do with at all. What if I let go? What happens then? That is one of the scariest moves I've seen in any type of performance, in any kind of situation. I would hate for me to have to try to do that at this present time.

How are you feeling about the costumes?

The only thing that I've said is no fluorescent pink and no see through. I don't think anybody needs to see my nipples on a Sunday evening! That's the only thing but the rest of it's fine - let's just jump into it. It's part of the character, it's part of the performance, it's part of the show.

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Do you think you'll cope with the criticism from the judges week on week?

Criticism is just a note. They've always been fair, the panel, with every skater, and they might be strict and they might be a bit harsh on them but they're still fair. For me it's just a note, so whatever they're going to tell me, I'm going to take it on board. It's not going to affect me personally, I'm not going to get offended by what they say. I've had to take notes all my life, whether it be in acting or in dance or a director's note or something like that. They're just trying to get the best out of me with their critiques. I'm just going to take on board what they say and then try and apply it next week.

Do you think having that performance background will help, especially as you did the Strictly Christmas special?

Probably but ballroom and the Strictly stuff is such a different style to what I'm used to. As a young one, I used to do a lot of street dance but a lot of street dance is very loosey goosey, whether it be arms or body or legs, it's very loose. There will be intricate movements within those, but they're not as posture specific when it comes down to it. The ballroom stuff that I've done for Strictly, it took a while for me to get into the vibe of it. I think the dance background is definitely going to help but I'm trying to push all of those things away. All of the answers that I would normally come up with, I've got to push it away because it's totally different on the ice. Arms are different, where you're looking is different, what your feet are doing, the left is doing one thing, the right is doing another. It's like learning a new language. Instead of coming to the ice with my preconceived knowledge, I've pushed it all out of my head and just gone, "What do you need me to do?" And learned that language from scratch.

How do you think your nerves will be before skating for the first time live in front of the nation?

I'm hoping that I go into show mode which I've done for theatre shows before and on EastEnders. We've done two live episodes as well, so I'm going to try and forget about the live element. I'm going to try and forget about the audience in that sense and just go out there to put on a show. I'm going to try and leave the nerves and the apprehension in the dressing room before we walk out and then go into show mode and go, "Come on, let's go do what we've been training to do." And trust in that.

Have you got many celeb mates that are going to be supporting you every Sunday night at the show?

A lot of the EastEnders crew, they're looking to come down. Tamika is one who plays Kim, Danielle Harold, and Scott Maslen. It depends on their schedules and what's

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happening. A lot of them have already said, "I would love to come down." As well as family and friends and people that I've known for years as well. I actually almost got told off by one of my old choreographers. When I announced that I got my partner, he was like, "Right Ricky, remember, you've got to be fabulous. There's going to be people watching you, there's going to be people supporting you, so make sure you put everything in and respect your partner. You got it?" And I was like, "Oh my gosh." I hadn't had that in years and was just like, "Yes, I've got it. No problem. All right, fine." When we get closer to the show and those people know their schedules, I'm sure there'll be loads that will want to come down.

Do you hope that the EastEnders fans will get behind you as well and vote?

The EastEnders fans have always been behind me ever since I've left. They're such a great bunch and they're such a special group of fans. They've supported me ever since I've left in whatever I have done. They're probably going to support me again and I hope they do. They're a fantastic bunch and I've got so much love for EastEnders and all the EastEnders fans, so fingers crossed they pick up the phone.

Have you got an idea of how far you want to go in the competition?

I would love to get to the final and then whatever happens in the final will happen, whoever wins, whatever the case may be. To get to the final is definitely a goal of mine and something to achieve. Fingers crossed I get there and we can have some fun when we get there.

Are you already thinking about your version of the Bolero?

Don't even speak to me about that yet! That's way too far, alright? Just get to the final, we don't have to talk about doing my own version of the Bolero on the 40-year anniversary in front of Jayne and Chris. That's way too much already [laughs]!

ENDS

ROXY SHAHIDI

When you got the call asking you to do Dancing and Ice, why did you say yes?

There's been a little bit of a history - I wanted to do the show nearly seven years ago. I thought it'd be fabulous, lots of sequins and big hair. At that time, I then realised I was 12 weeks pregnant which I didn't know when I had the meeting. I had to say, "Oh, look, I'm pregnant. I don't think it's going to be a good idea for me." And then my daughter was small and it's a huge commitment. I'd still be working at

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Emmerdale, and the travel, once the live shows happen is very demanding. I just knew for a long time it wasn't really something that would be right for me. And then this year I got the call, "Do you want to pop in?" And I was like, "Oh, do I?" I'm a little bit older now and a little bit more cautious. Karen, who's the head coach, has just got such a wonderful calming energy on the ice. Honestly, after 10 minutes on the ice with her all my anxieties melted away. I thought, "Yeah, I want to do this." And then by the time I got on the train on the way home, I was like, "Oh my God, what have I just said?" She was like, "Will you do it?" And I was like, "Yes, Karen, I will." And I got on the train and I was like, "Oh my God, what am I thinking? Am I really going to do this?"

What did your family and friends think when you told them that you'd said yes?

My friends are all really excited and very generously keep saying, which is quite pressurising, "Oh my God, you're going to be amazing. You're going to be amazing. It's going to be great. It's the yoga." Everyone keeps saying that to me. And I'm like, "I don't know whether it translates." My friends have been really excited and really, really big support from everyone at Emmerdale which I'm really grateful for. Again, it's quite pressurising because everyone who's done it from Emmerdale has won and everyone keeps reminding me of that!

Have any of the Emmerdale winners given you advice?

Matthew just said to me, "Look, it's really, really, really hard work. Be aware it will take over your life. It's every single day." Some days you work on top of it and then suddenly you realise how full on it is physically and schedule-wise. He really warned me about that but he also said, "You're going to absolutely love it." And so far he's right. It's really intense but also I am enjoying it as challenging and as scary as it is.

Have you skated before?

No skating experience. I skated twice in America when I was a kid and when I first auditioned, that kind of came back to me, not straight away. When I first auditioned, I was a little bit more fearless because I was that bit younger. This time I was surprised at how there was nothing. When I first got on the ice with Karen, she was literally holding both my hands and we were near the side of the rink. But even by the end of that session with her, she had me moving away from the rail and we were moving on the ice. It has been a slow but steady journey so far.

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On a scale of Todd Carty crashing off the ice to Nile Wilson who won last year, where are you on the scale?

Currently, I would say I'm a strong two. If I got to like a seven, I think I'd be proud of that. I don't expect that I'm going to be doing handstands or whatever else he was up to last year, but I believe that I can do a reasonable job! I just want to be able to do my best. I just want to look back and go, "I absolutely pushed myself as much as I could." And I really want to just be the best that I can for myself and for the show.

What is your biggest fear about taking on this challenge?

I think two things, and it's quite boring really, but the schedule, because it's so intense. I knew that was going to be full on but it's safety. That's the scary thing for me because it's easy before you start. But once you start, Stephen, as you know, hurt his ankle week two. It's this interesting juxtaposition of the beauty of being on the ice, the glamour of it, the showmanship, the magic that you feel when you're gliding around, and disastrous injuries. I think it's navigating that and trying to convince yourself to be confident enough to keep pushing yourself and trying new things whilst being aware that the ice is brutal. It's not forgiving. People keep saying that as well!

What was your first day on the ice like?

My very first day was with my coach Ed, and it was a shock because you realise that a lot of people when they ice skate, they're not actually ice skating. They're kind of walking on ice and you've got to learn to glide which requires a specific kind of technique, more balance, and kind of retraining your brain a bit to move your feet in a way that you don't move when you are walking. I thought I could ice skate. I thought I could go forward by this point very slowly. He was like, "No!" I was spending two hours just trying to figure out how to move forward. That was a bit of an eye-opener just how much I actually had to learn. You think when you watch it, "Oh my gosh, a lot of work must go into that." Oh my gosh, no. The pros have been doing it for years but actually every single second on the ice is a technique. It's something that has to be learned. If you change direction even a tiny bit, or you take your balance on one foot, there's hours and hours of practice that's gone into that. I think I was blissfully unaware of just how much mental and physical work was involved to get from tottering around on the ice to moving smoothly and doing anything that's remotely watchable. It's been an eye-opener just to go, "Wow, I didn't realise just how hard it all is."

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Once you signed up to the show, did you do any preparation like hitting the gym?

I actually started doing yoga with my boots on, which sounds ridiculous, and probably is. Certain balances or just trying to find that central point of balance with the boots on. It's really hard on my legs, so I tried to work in a few of the balances that I thought I'd have to do in the show into the yoga. I did get the boots on and try to get comfortable in them. I was really tempted to go to the ice rink and just get a coach and start training. That was my secret intention, just get on with it now but I'm a mum with a job. There's no time. I saw the producers and said "I'm really sorry, I've not had any time on the ice." And they were like, "No, that's good. That's the point of the show. We want to see your journey." I was like, "Oh, that's great because I'm awful." You have got to embrace where you're at, basically, embrace where you are in your little ice skating journey and just do your best. That is my mantra.

You're partnered with Sylvain Longchambon, how do you feel about that?

Everyone keeps saying that he's the best because he's done the show for years. He's fantastic at the lifts, very driven, very focused. Sylvain's so lovely. I think he's going to push me but safely and I think we're quite comfortable already. He's got a really good work ethic and I think I have as well. I think we're just going to work really, really hard, basically to be the best we can be.

What kind of teacher do you think he needs to be to bring the best out in you?

I think first and foremost for me, I need to feel safe. As soon as I feel safe, I'll work hard as long as I feel safe, or I'll push myself as long as I feel safe. Safety is a big thing for me. That's the one thing that my husband said to me. I think he is secretly excited about seeing the show and all the fun of it but he just said one thing consistently, which is just be safe. Be safe. I want to be safe but I want to be fabulous at the same time. Safe and fabulous, darling!

What did you think when you saw who you'd be doing the show with?

After we did that first day in London, I thought Ryan Thomas was fantastic on the ice. He was practically like an angel. He turned backwards, he's going forward. I was like, "Well, you are going to win." And then I saw Greg, he was the first person that I saw actually when I walked in, he's flying around there doing these dramatic stops. I was like, "Oh, great, an Olympian that can ice skate. He's going to win. I just think everyone's lovely, first and foremost, and I think everyone's entering into it with a really good spirit. We know it's January, it's miserable weather, we want to have a good time, we want the audience to have a good time. I think everyone's coming into

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it with a lot of positivity, a lot of united team support. Equally, I think there's a lot of ambition in the group as well. There's a good competitive spirit while still being supportive. I think it's going to be a really good season.

Are you competitive as a person?

I'm competitive with myself. That's it. I've never looked at someone else like, "Oh my God, I've got to beat them." I'm very much like, I know you can do better. You need to work harder, you can do this. It's much more about me wanting to give my personal best. For myself, for the show, for the viewers. Come on, let's give the people a show.

Will we be seeing you do a headbanger at some stage?

Definitely the lifts, I think I'll be fine with. I don't know about the headbanger itself, not necessarily because I don't trust my partner, but more about it really is about you holding yourself in a very exact position. I think it's something that I wouldn't rule out, but it's something that I couldn't now, at this stage, be like, "Oh yeah, I'm definitely going to do that." I don't know whether I've got the ability or the confidence to but it's not something I'd rule out.

How are you feeling about the costumes, will you welcome the Lycra, sequins and spray tans?

Yes, please! Big, big, big hair, big makeup, spray tan me, give me the nails. I want to look like Cher every single day for the rest of my life and it starts here. I'm feeling the showmanship of it all. I actually think the costume team have been really good. I've talked to them about what I do feel comfortable with, what I don't feel comfortable with. I'm very much about female empowerment. I love women to look strong and beautiful and sexy but everyone has to be comfortable with what they're wearing. I'm not a little miniskirt girl, I'm a power catsuit. I'm a shoulder pad. That's who I am. I think the team worked really hard to create outfits to make the individuals feel and look their best. I'm going to try and look as fabulous as possible, darling, it's once in a lifetime. Sew me in it and send me out!

What's it been like working with Torvill and Dean?

Oh my God, it's so good. They are so, so, so lovely. I literally want to take them home and make them live in the back room so I can take them out and chat to them every night. They're so gorgeous, honestly, I adore them. I don't know why you would think this, but because they're such legends, you think they might be anything other than just the nicest people in the world. And they are. They're just the most humble, sweetest people. I just adore them. Having them turn up and film in Emmerdale, my

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little mind was very spaced out. I was like, "What is going on? Why are you in the Woolpack?" It was brilliant!

How are you going to feel about being critiqued every week?

I'll just tell them off, that'll be best. Don't be mean. "That's all I could give you this week. I'll try better." You know what I mean? What can you do? No, that won't bother me, I don't think. You can only do your best.

Is there a particular judge that you want to impress the most?

Jayne because I think she's very focused on the minutia, on the detail of it, on the specifics, on the tiniest detail. Even if it's the simplest move she wants to see the perfect positioning of everything. I think definitely Jayne's the one that I want to impress most.

Will Emmerdale ease off your work schedule while you're on the show?

I said at the end of the day, I want to give a hundred percent. If I was heavy in story, I don't think I could have done the show. They said, "Well, actually, we will just pepper you in. We didn't plan to have a huge story for you at the beginning of the year, so we won't, we're just going to try and pepper you in and then you can focus on doing Dancing on Ice." Otherwise, I don't think it'd be fair, not only to me but to the shows. You don't want someone turning up, doing half a job. I've been really lucky with that. They've been so supportive.

Have you got a host of famous mates who'll come down and support you on the show?

So many people from Emmerdale! There will be an Emmerdalian in the audience every single week for sure. Amy Walsh, Laura Norton, Zoe Henry says she's going to come. Matthew said he is going to come. I know Charlie's not in Emmerdale anymore, but Charlie says she's going to come. There will be loads of people. I really hope the Emmerdale fans will support me too. You never know, do you? They might be like, "Oh my God, she's awful. She's an embarrassment. We're not voting for that." It's like, "I'm really sorry guys." They are a really loyal audience for sure. I'm sure they'll want to support me and I'll try and not let them down. I'll do my best.

Have you thought how far you'll get in the competition, or are you just taking it week by week?

I think there's no reason why I shouldn't at least get halfway through. You don't know because we're still at the beginning stages of learning, so you might just go, "Oh my

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God, week three. That's as good as I'm ever going to get." But I think if I really work hard, I should be a reasonable contender.

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ADELE ROBERTS

What made you say yes to Dancing On Ice?

I've been dying to be on this show since it started. I'm a massive fan. I even have all the DVDs of the show. The technology doesn't even exist anymore, I've got the DVDs, I can't even watch them! I love the show and for me, it gives you that Christmas feel after Christmas is finished. It's January, you've got no money, it's cold, you don't want to go back to work, school or college - this is the best thing for Sunday nights. It just makes you feel good. Another reason I wanted to do it as well is just more recently being able to reclaim my body after what it's been through. I feel like it's allowing me to take back who I am again.

What did your family and friends think when you said you're doing it?

When they found out I was doing it, they were like, "Are you mad? You're going to fall." I was like, "Thanks a lot guys. Thanks for being so positive!" I've fallen so they were right. They all think I'm crazy because I'm not an ice skater and I can't dance!

Do you have any skating experience?

When I was really young, my mum used to send me and my sister to the YMCA in Southport and I used to go roller skating. There's no ice rink near Southport where I live. I've Googled it and the nearest one's in Blackburn and that's miles away from us, it's right across the other side of Lancashire. Roller skating was the best that we could do and she probably took us there instead of getting a babysitter. We didn't have iPads in those days. We'd go down to the rink and I used to love it but they had loads of kids there that had their own skates that were really good. Me and my sister were just more sort of fumbling along. Apart from that I've been to ice rinks the odd time, probably once or twice as an adult and just gone really slow and held onto my girlfriend for dear life. That's it!

On a scale of Todd Carty crashing off the side of the rink to Nile Wilson, where are you?

I was watching that video of Todd and to be fair to him, he actually glided out. Now I've been doing it, I've got so much respect for every celeb who's ever done it - well

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done to you because it is so hard! It's got its own set of physics. It's like I don't know gravity anymore. Every little movement sends you off on another tangent. I'm moving along the scale - I started at Todd and I'm moving towards Nile!

Do you know anybody that's done it before that you could tap up for advice?

Kelly Holmes is a friend of mine. Not that anybody remembers that she was on it but I remember because I've been a fan that long and she inspired me to do it. She was one of the reasons, I really look up to Kelly and I remember her just giving it a go and I remember thinking, "Gosh, I can't imagine a runner doing something like skating". It's just a very different motion for the body. I thought she was really brave taking it on. I messaged her and asked if she would come and she said she would. She said, "Just enjoy it and learn as much as you can. Just practice, practice, practice."

Do you feel like you've got anything to prove?

No, I'm always in competition with myself. I think it's a privilege to be alive. I understand that now. What a joy, what amazing problems to have that I might fall on the ice. I get that now. And so no, there's no expectation from me. Just making the show is my prize. Anything from here is a bonus.

Do you have any fears ahead of the competition?

I just hope I can learn to dance. I'm not very good with choreography. I've realised I don't know my right and my left. That's a little bit of a problem! I feel like they've given a learner driver a Ferrari, I don't know how to drive this. I don't know how to do it. Hopefully by the time I get to the show I'll look like I can skate. I don't really get worried about things like that and I don't mind falling over. I just think at the end of the day I have got my small intestine poking out my stomach, do you know what I mean? There's not much worse than that really.

Are you having to take precautions when it comes to your stoma?

Yeah, totally. Being new to the world of stomas, I didn't really know what to expect. I've realised that Audrey - that's what I call it - doesn't like the ice. She's very quiet. She's been a joy, actually. I've noticed that because I've got a hole on the right side of my torso, I don't have a centre where it used to be. I'm having to relearn how to use my body actually and rotation's quite hard. I've got to really, really think about my movement on the ice but it's helped me connect with my body, so it's been a blessing as well.

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What was your first day on the ice like?

Awful! They put you on the ice and they give you Torvill and Dean, two of the best skaters of all time and then they don't tell you what to do. I was like, "How am I supposed to skate to them?" You just have to sort of work it out but I think they throw you in at the deep end and that's the best thing that you can do because it gets you ready for that mindset that you've got to be ready to fail. You can't be afraid to fail and it's only in it going wrong that you can learn to put it right. It was very nerve wracking but they were both so lovely and then I thought, "This could be quite fun actually".

Given you're a super fan, what was it like being with them?

Amazing! They're even more amazing in real life than they are on the screen - they have star power. They've just got this beautiful aura and they did this move where they skated towards me and everything is perfect. It's precision, and the blades, the way it cuts into the ice, you can tell they're masters of what they do.

What would you say has surprised you the most about the physical side of the show?

It's really tightened up my body. It's an amazing workout. You really get out of breath but it's annoying because your smartwatch doesn't pick it up because it's skating and I'm not running. It is like, "Oh, you've been lazy today." I'm like, "I'm not!" My body's starting to get strong. It's engaging all my muscles and my core. It's helping me come out of my shell. It's making me sit up straight and get better posture. I didn't realise it was going to give me so much so quickly.

You're partnered with Mark Hanretty, what's it like working with him?

I was a bit starstruck when I met him because I've watched the show for years and I felt a bit bad for him because his partners have been stellar. He's had Kimberly Wyatt or last year, Carley Stenson. I told him I'll give it everything that I've got. He's just such a lovely, gracious guy and he wants us to do well. Obviously he knows I'm never going to be figure skater level like him, so they know to just work with what they've got. It's been lovely getting to meet him and work with him.

What kind of teacher do you need him to be to bring the best out in you?

Just what he's been so far. He's firm, but fair and gentle and kind with it. He will be very honest with me. He doesn't let me slack off. If my fingers are not in the right place he tells me. He constantly makes me be in a graceful position. I just need more of that really, I just want him to bend me into shape!

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What did you think when you saw who you're going to be doing the show with?

I think the lineup this year is amazing. It's very diverse and everybody has their own super power. I feel like we're all power rangers. You can see why they've picked every single person this time. There are no weak links. Everybody has something that would help them on the ice and especially mindset as well. There's a lot of people with excellent mindset. You can't take anything for granted. I think they're all winners.

Are you competitive?

Yes, I am. Definitely with myself but I've entered this to give it my all and I want to make Mark proud, I want to make my family proud and I want to give it everything. If I don't feel that I've done that, I'll know I've let myself down. Again, I just want to do this to bring awareness to bowel cancer and celebrate ostomies and show what our bodies can do. For that reason, this is like we're going to give this everything.

Does that feel bigger than the show?

Yeah, there was a little lad that came up to me at the rink one of the days that I was practising and he had a stoma and he'd only just got it. I think he was about six years old. His mum came up and she said, "Do you mind if I introduce you to my son?" And explained about him and I was like, "God, that'd be my honour." He came up and she said to him, "This lady's got a stoma too." He looked at me and then I showed him and he is like, I'm going to get emotional, but his little face, he was like, "Oh!" He'd never seen anybody that had a stoma before and yeah, that's the reason I'm doing it. That's why the show is bigger than just lifting the trophy. I was telling Mark as well about the little boy and he said, "Oh, I didn't know kids have them." I was like, "Oh, absolutely. Babies can have them." Anybody with a digestive issue, really. It's not a cancer thing, it's a digestive issue. Just to raise awareness for that and help those kids be able to go to school and not get bullied, that'll be everything.

Would you describe yourself as fearless?

If I get far enough to do a head banger, it's on. I'm fearless when it comes to that kind of thing. When I was a kid, I was a tomboy and I was always jumping off things and hurting myself. Sometimes you're like, "Oh, shouldn't have done that." I always get back up!

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Are you going to embrace the Lycra, the sequins, all of that?

Bring it on, yeah. I said to them, "Roll me in glitter." I was like, "Yeah, do what you want. Just go wild. Drag me up!" I want to look like The Vivienne did last year. I don't mind what they want to do with me.

How are you feeling about being critiqued every week?

From radio, I'm really used to feedback, they call it feedback. I've been at stations where it's been quite brutal. And then I've been at Radio 1 where it's been lovely. I think that because I've watched the show and I've seen the judges, I know that they'll say anything that they've got to say with kindness. I know that anything they do have to say will be a good thing to work on. Hopefully it'll go well and hopefully I won't be so sort of in the moment and emotional that it'll upset me. I hope I just take it all in my stride.

Is there any particular judge that you want to impress the most?

That's a great question. I love Jayne. I love Oti too. So yeah, Jayne and Oti, if I get a nice comment from either of them, I think it'll mean a little bit more. Just because they're queens, I love both of them.

Have you got lots of celeb mates that are going to be coming to the show every week and cheering you on?

I hope so. I feel like some of them might be like, "We'll see if she's rubbish first", but if I'm not, they might. I know Kelly's coming down and I've not really asked too many others. I've asked Grimmy, so hopefully he'll come but I'm just going to try and stay in as long as I can so that they can come. Otherwise, if I'm out first, it'll be like, "I'm sorry guys." I've also got lots of people that I know from other areas outside the radio. I've got lots of people that I'd like to bring, so fingers crossed I can.

Do you hope all your fans will get behind you and vote?

Yeah, I hope so. I don't really fare well in these types of competitions. I hope that I'll have that support. I feel like the Radio 1 listeners hopefully won't have forgotten me already and they'll help me. I think as well, the presenters will help with that too.

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Have you thought in the back of your mind how far you'd like to get in the competition, like the final so you can do your own Bolero?

I like to visualise things. I like to watch things, that's how I learn. I've watched the Bolero so many times now since I knew I was doing the show and I just keep watching all the other contestants. That's something that I like to do now at night and really appreciate what those celebs are doing. I didn't really know before just watching it at home as entertainment. Now I'm really studying what they're doing and thinking, "I hope I can get that good". I've just started working my way through the weeks. I'm like, "Right, try and learn the things that they're doing in week one. Let's see if we can move on to week two dances and see if you can try some of those moves". Hopefully as Mark helps me and I keep watching and visualising I'll move further and further along in the competition. Obviously I'd love to go all the way but I also won't be too heartbroken if I don't because I've got no expectations.

So you're watching old clips as homework?

Yeah! I just pop it on because I need to visualise stuff to understand it. If I watch other people and it gives me comfort knowing that Kelly Holmes learned to do it, Carly Stenson learned to do it. I see it as inspiration. I've got Mark so I'm going to go and watch all of his old partners and all of his old dances so I can see how he works with different people. I'll probably go back to the start when he first joined and see who his first partner was and watch their dances on YouTube. It is more to just sort of drink in the vibe of the show. I think that's more what it is.

ENDS

LOU SANDERS

What made you sign up to this show and to take on this challenge?

I love adrenaline, I love learning new skills, I've always wanted to be a backing dancer and I think this is as close as I'll get. I can't actually dance and I think you don't start as a backing dancer with no skills in your forties. Don't quote me on that - it's just a hunch.

What did your family and friends say when they found out you were going to be doing the show?

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They all think it's a good fit. I think they're all pleased. My mum keeps telling me to rewatch Dancing on Ice, and watch Strictly, she keeps saying, "You've got to learn how to hold your body," which is true. I was hoping someone else would be holding it for a bit!

And what is your ice-skating background?

Once a year at Christmas! I went when I was a kid and I thought, "This is brilliant, why don't we do this more?" But we didn't live near the rink and I wasn't really at the sort of age where kids get to call the shots. Nowadays, kids tell you what they're doing, but back in the day our parents told us what to do.

When you go once a year, are you quite confident on the ice?

Well, I charge round like a bull, so I'm not as scared, but this is about fundamentals and grace, so that's what I am trying to drill.

On a scale of Todd Carty famously crashing off the side of the rink to Nile Wilson who won last year, where do you rate your ability?

Oh, Nile was beautiful. I think the athletes have just got it. He really knew how to use his body whereas me, they're like, "Do this, do that." And I'm like, "What?" They have to tell me about 100 times and then suddenly one day it'll click and I'm like, "I've got it! Watch this!" And then I'll face plant. I was really competitive at the start. I was like, "I really want to do this and that." I've decided it's silly to get competitive because it's not my world, so I'm going to just enjoy it now. I would like a woman to win it though because that's not happened for ten years. Adele is a beautiful skater and she's been through a hell of a time, so it would be cool if she won. But as the old adage goes, it is the taking part that counts and we're having the time of our lives.

So you've taken the pressure off yourself?

Well, I mean, I want to be proud of myself and try hard. I'm still committed to going as far as I can, because it's such an unbelievable opportunity, you'd be mad not to try. I wish I'd done more ballet. I got kicked out of ballet when I was eight because they were like, "No, this is not for you. Come on, stop embarrassing yourself." And then I had a ballet lesson the other day, actually, because my coach said I should. So, I had a one-to-one, it's humiliating because I was just like, "I can't do what you're asking me to do." As an adult we don't really put ourselves through that embarrassment really. You do feel a bit useless and a bit like a lump of clay or something that can't be moulded, because it's already been cooked. But, I'm improving on the ice all the time and that's exciting. I do feel so lucky I get to learn

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and throw myself in. Having access to the expertise of Karen, Dan and Brendyn and getting tips off the ever elegant Mark Hanretty - it's a dream come true.

How do you think you'll handle the performance side of the routines?

It's been a bit nerve wracking because obviously Dancing on Ice is live. I spoke to a friend who took part in Strictly Come Dancing in Ireland. We were doing Live At The Apollo and I said, "Are you nervous?" And he went, "No, because after doing the dancing show, that is a whole bag of nerves that you cannot even comprehend." I guess it's whatever you get used to, isn't it?

Do you feel like you've got anything to prove?

There's a saying nothing to prove, everything to share! I'm going to try and remember that and try to not let my ego get involved (easier said than done).

Coming from a comedy background, do you think people are going to expect funny routines from you?

Well, there's a time and a place isn't there? I don't think I'll be pirouetting and then sort of shouting out a punchline, but you never know.

What was your first day on the ice like?

There was a lot to take in, I was excited but naive shall we say. And I had a lot going on at the time, but I've cleared my schedule more now, and things have got better and better. I absolutely love it and it gets better every week, just seeing the graft pay off is such a thrill.

Has anything surprised you about the physical side of the show that you perhaps didn't expect?

Just how much poise you need. It's funny because we take our personalities onto the ice, so I'm sometimes a liability and I'm slightly chaotic when I skate, which is not the ideal remit. You have to be still, so the ballet dancers or people who have got control and composure work well on the ice. If anything, I need to change my whole core personality! Oopsie.

You've been paired with Brendyn. How excited are you for that partnership?

He's great, he's exceeded my expectations. I quite literally am trusting him with my life so it's lucky we really get on. He's so fun and funny and he's so talented.

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What kind of teacher does he need to be to bring the best out in you?

Patient, kind, strong and wise! Sometimes you have to unlock someone's psychology, don't you? Like my trainer before when I was in my competitive era at the start, I couldn't get something and he said, "Oh well, someone else has already got this." And I was like, "What?" And then I really went for it. Brendyn has a slightly different approach, which now, I've changed my approach too is working quite well!

How do you feel about working alongside a skating partner?

It's a laugh isn't it? It's fun to collaborate on something - I'm used to working alone a lot with comedy so it's nice to have a buddy.

You said you're out of your competitive phase, might that kick back in as the competition gets underway?

Who knows what will happen?! Have you heard of safe, clean fun? That's what I'll go for. But I will absolutely be trying my best. I mean I am very competitive but only if I have a chance haha.

What did you think when you saw who you'd be on the show with?

The line-up is great and they are all so nice. I was really excited to meet Claire Sweeney because I used to watch her in Brookside and loved her for ages. I know Adele quite well now and I love Adele. She is so nice. I was weirdly very excited about Ricky Hatton. But since meeting everyone they're all great and all up for a laugh. It's a really good bunch to be fair. I hope Hannah dances to an S Club song.

The guys seem to be quite competitive...

Let them tussle, I say. I'll pull up a chair. But yeah, let a couple of chicks get to the final for the love of God.

Will we see you throwing yourself into dangerous lifts like the headbanger?

I think I'll give it all a go, that's all I can say. I'll give it a go. I will be scared because I knocked myself unconscious once roller skating, and it does hurt and you see stars. The thing that I really don't want to lose is any more brain cells because I really need them. The ones I've got left, I really need.

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How did you knock yourself out?

I went down a ramp and then I must've skidded or something and then knocked myself out and you see stars like in a cartoon, it's really weird. I saw stars and it was spinning around and I was like, "Wow, the cartoons are right. The cartoons are factually correct."

Have you done roller skating for a long time?

I did it for a couple of years, but stopped going about a year ago, because I didn't get the chance to go enough so I got a bit stuck. I plan to go back to it but you have to go regularly to get better.

Do you think roller skating will help you on the ice?

A little in terms of fear and pushing yourself and committing. But what would really help is if I'd done more jam skating. Jam skating is the dance one and that's where a lot of the techniques are similar, like the mohawk and the way that you spin is very similar in certain spins I think. I haven't done much of that. I've done the park stuff and you have to lean forward but in ice skating you can't lean forward so I had to unlearn that, but it's got to have helped more than it hindered for sure.

How are you feeling about taking on the costumes?

Do you know what's really embarrassing, the costume people are great and I had a meeting with them and I said, "Oh, I don't really suit long dresses." And they went, "Yeah, it's on ice, long dresses won't work!" And I said, "Oh yeah, don't worry, I have seen the show!"

Are you ready to be critiqued every week?

Well, I love Oti Mabuse. She's got such a nice way about her, there's something about her that's so electric. She really sees people and sort of gives people beautiful life advice. And the same can be said of Chris and Jayne; they're so classy and kind, and Chris is funny! I met them both and they had great energy. The only one I haven't met is Ashley, but he seems really fun and a ball of energy. So, from what I've seen, they're not really mean, they seem fair. Everyone on the show is incredible, Karen Barber is a brilliant, elegant force and Dan Whiston is a creative choreography genius too.

Coming from the comedy world, you must be used to dealing with hecklers so can handle criticism?

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No, I'm a very sensitive little flower and I'm prone to crying, but I really hope that I don't cry on national telly! I'll say "thank you for your feedback and does that come with a packet of tissues?"

Have you got any celeb mates that are going to be cheering you on every week?

Oh God, I have to send some bribes, don't I? Most of my friends want to come but I haven't been vetting them on their tv credits haha. It's the thing that most people have said they want to come to which is nice.

Have you got an idea of how far you think you'll get?

You have to take it week by week or you go mad. I think it's damaging to your psyche to have too much hope. But obviously, I want to stay in for as long as possible.

ENDS