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Friday, February 22, 2008

Politicians, athletes and businesspeople look to shine in Dancing With The Stars
It's anyone's guess as to who will clinch this year's Dancing With The Stars competition

Sirkka Huish
 Sub-Editor

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Bermuda's 'celebrities' are ready to twist their limbs, swivel their hips and kick their legs with huge smiles fixed to their faces, writes The Bermuda Sun's Sirkka Huish. The six contestants in this year's Dancing With The Stars have had just six weeks to be put through their paces by the Sabor Dance School. It's the second year the island has held its own version of the popular TV show and contestants will be seen doing individual dances before taking part in a group salsa dance-off. They are out to impress a panel of judges, which will include Bruce Barritt and Minister Dale Butler, who was a contestant last year.

They've been whipped into shape, and if they're in shape already, they've honed their rhythmic skills. Angela Hayward, director/owner of the Sabor Dance School, said: "The whole team is doing a fabulous job. One of the most beautiful things is seeing how much they have improved over the weeks. Some of them started with two left feet and have now become great dancers." Dancing With The Stars on Saturday, March 1 will be part of the National Dance Foundation's National Gala at the Fairmont Southampton's Mid-Ocean Amphitheatre. For information on tickets call the National Dance Foundation on 236-3319.

Teresa Perozzi

Hold it steady: Yacht Club Commodore Ralph Richardson says he's "out of his comfort zone" as he swings around his dance partner Angela Hayward. *Photos by Sirkka Huish

Bermuda's world boxing champ Teresa Perozzi says she's got the dance moves down, but admits being feminine will need a little more work. Most people will be used to seeing the island's top brawler scrapping in the ring rather than daintily twirling around the dance floor in her high-heels. But she is looking forward to proving to people she does know how to glam it up with the dress, hair and make-up. Teresa said: "It's taken a while, but I've got it down now. "Although I'm so focused on what I'm doing, I need to start feeling comfortable and having fun. I need to work on being sexier and flirtier."



She added: "People will probably be surprised that I'm a boxer as they'll see a different, side to me with the dress, hair and make-up. I'll be looking feminine for the night!" Teresa, who is a mother-of-one, believes her boxing has made her a better dancer because of her strength and co-ordination. She said: "I'm in this competition to win it but there's a great group of people taking part. I think my toughest competition will be from Mark Pettingill and Dame Jennifer Smith." Teresa admits she was "very hesitant" when she was first approached about taking part in Dancing With The Stars. She may have done ballet when she was about 10, but when it comes to hitting the dance floor she prefers to sit back "and watch everyone else." Teresa, who is keen to keep up the dancing as it improves her confidence, said: "I was a bit nervous at the start, but it's great, I love it, I had no idea I could do this." Teresa started training in mid-January and tries to get together with dance instructor Marshall Weller at least twice a week to dance the cha-cha.

One step at a time: Celebrities learn the moves from the instructors at the Sabor Dance School.

But when she signed up for the dance challenge she had no idea about her forthcoming World Title Challenge. On the day after Dancing With The Stars she is flying to Germany to take on the Natasha Ragosina on March 15. Teresa joked she was following in the footsteps of Laila Ali's, who was on TV's Dancing With The Stars, and said she would be on American Gladiators next!



One, two step: Boxer Teresa Perozzi is ready to get all glammed up to do the cha cha with Sabor dance instructor Marshall Weller.

Mark Pettingill

UBP MP Mark Pettingill quite likes the idea of being a dancer, but he knows he's not quite ready to give up law to appear on stage in Broadway. With the "odd merry moment" as his only dancing experience, the Warwick West MP and lawyer has had to start from scratch. It took Mr. Pettingill a while to get the hang of not stepping on his partner's toes, but now he knows what he is doing he's "in it to win it." He's having so much fun hot-footing it around the dance floor that he's decided he likes the idea of being able to add dancing to his repertoire. Mr. Pettingill, who works for Wakefield Quin, said: "Initially it was probably harder than I thought it would be, but I've got a great teacher and it's got easier. "It's now a lot of fun, but things have been a bit crazy given my schedule, I find myself dancing at two in the morning!" He joked: "It's always been a real ambition of mine to be a dancer but I got stuck doing law. I should have really ended up on Broadway!" Mr. Pettingill has been regularly rehearsing with dance partner Teresa Whitter. They will be spicing things up with the rumba. But he is keeping things close to his chest saying: "I don't want to give away our preparation secrets." Mr. Pettingill blamed his ballet teacher girlfriend for roping him into Dancing With The Stars saying: "I was set up, they talked to her about it before they talked to me!" Although he did go to see Bermuda's version of Dancing With The Stars last year and said: "They must have seen my natural rhythm and knew I was the right guy to ask. He added: "If Dale Butler can do it, I can do it." As for the big night, Mr. Pettingill is ready to rise to the challenge, although he'll be keeping an eye on Dame Jennifer Smith. He said: "I'm in it to win it, but I've certainly got some competition. Dame Jennifer used to be a professional dancer, when you see her moves, you know she's had the experience."

Dame Jennifer Smith

The former premier refuses to rest on her laurels even though she's one of the favourites to clinch this year's Dancing With The Stars. Other contestants have called her a "professional dancer" saying you only have to watch her move to see what a natural she is. She is no stranger to dancing and has a strong arts background as a board member of Bermuda's National Dance Foundation. But Dame Jennifer, who is Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly, is determined to get her moves just right and is continuing to practise with her dance partner Travis Gilbert. The two of them are out to impress with their version of the Argentine Tango. Mr. Gilbert was reluctant to give too much away before the big night, but did say rehearsals with Dame Jennifer had been "awesome." He said: "She's a hard worker and she likes to get everything right. "She's very, very easy to work with as she's got the arts background and has had experience in performing." The Bermuda Sun was unable to speak to Dame Jennifer before press time.



No stepping on toes: Dame Jennifer Smith is a favourite to win next week's Dancing With The Stars. Her dance partner Travis Gilbert, who she is pictured with, says: "She likes to get everything right."

Karl Outerbridge

National cyclist Karl Outerbridge saw himself as a bit of a breakdancer back in the 1980s popping and locking his way through his favourite tunes. He was a proud member of the breakdancing group Bermuda Onion Breakers who used to compete in competitions around the island. But as the years passed and Mr. Outerbridge focused on his cycling, he admits he developed "two left feet."

Mr. Outerbridge, who was a member of the Bermuda National Team from 1991 to 2000 and competed in the Pan Am Games in Cuba, said: "I had danced before in the 1980s, but I haven't danced for decades."

When Mr. Outerbridge was first asked to take part in Dancing With The Stars, he thought it was a great opportunity, but then it hit him and he thought "uh-oh, what have I done?"

Asked whether he had improved until the watchful eye of teacher Sophie Dier, who is teaching him the Pasadoble, he said: "Hell yeah."

He has been busy practising about twice a week and says the moves had now finally sunk in.

Mr. Outerbridge, who works in reinsurance at Aspen, said: "It's been a lot of fun and I'm now ready. I don't think I'll get stage fright. If I was looking out at five people I think I would, but as I'm looking out at hundreds of people, I think I'll be fine!"

He says he probably won't have time to continue dancing after the competition, as he is still a keen cyclist. But he said: "If anyone doesn't already have a hobby, they should give it a go."

Pamela Barit Nolan

The executive director of The Centre of Philanthropy isn't under any illusion about if she can dance, she knows she has two left feet and no rhythm whatsoever! Pamela Barit Nolan doesn't care about winning Dancing With The Stars as she's taking part just for the experience. She just hopes no one in the audience notices when she messes up her steps.

Mrs. Barit Nolan, who used to work in the financial services sector, said: "I've probably become less self-conscious over time. It's only in the last 10 days that I've started to have fun, before that I found rehearsals terrifying."

"Without any professional dance experience I'd be busy staring at my feet or staring at my partner's shoulder."

Mrs. Barit Nolan said she does recall doing a dance class as her winter sport while at high school but only because "I didn't want to do cross-country, squash or anything like that."

Having suggested names of other people who should take part in Dancing With The Stars, she was surprised to be asked to take part herself. She thought "you have got to be kidding" but changed her mind when she remembered hearing last year's contestants saying it had been a great experience. She is going to do the Merangue with Steve Bean.

She admitted: "I'm not very good at practising, but I'm always up for a challenge."

When asked if she was ready for the big night, Mrs. Barit Nolan simply replied 'No' saying "If I take a couple of wrong steps, most of the audience probably won't even notice."

Mrs. Barit Nolan - who describes herself as a "blue jeans and t-shirt person" - added that she had a great time buying glitzy outfits with Dame Jennifer Smith and Teresa Perozzi.

Ralph Richardson

He's convinced the National Dance Foundation made the wrong choice when they selected him for Dancing With The Stars.

The Commodore of The Royal Bermuda Yacht Club says he is completely out of his comfort zone and is taking "three times as long as everyone else to learn the moves."

It took him a "few days of thinking" before he agreed to take part in Dancing With Stars and did so only because he believes in the cause.

Mr. Richardson said: "I am not a dancer, I just don't dance."

"I told them I'd do it, but I said 'You are going to see you made the wrong choice.' I was pretty sure they would kick me out the group."

He added: "When the rest of the class takes a right turn, I am the only person who goes left!"

Mr. Richardson said he had had "a rocky start" but was now beginning to enjoy himself while dancing the waltz with dance instructor Angela Hayward.

His only goal is to successfully make it through his routine. To do this he is practising every day - he does 45 minutes before he leaves for work and sneaks in additional practice at work, in the basement of ACE, when he can.

Mr. Richardson, who is an executive director of the ACE Foundation, says he had a "few bad attempts" at dancing as a teenager. He said: "It's certainly been a learning experience for me, I am completely out of my comfort zone."

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