



Ice Castles: An Instant Classic Revisited

aussie SKATES

FIG

W N U N D E R

Ken Congemi

It's All In The Mind

Amanda James

Championship Memories

The Road To

Nationals

Generation Next Heats Up The Icehouse

SUMMER
2011

Her Journey Begins

With Kassidy - Rae Browell

With Four Continents done, but the Junior and Senior World Championships looming, it has already been a jam - packed year for Australian skating, the athletes, support teams, and their devoted fans. Now that the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games are behind us, a new generation of skaters is working hard on the national & global scene. Their eyes are no doubt firmly set, on Sochi in 2014 and beyond.

Already, Australia has a fresh crop of athletes getting crucial exposure and experience on the international circuit. New skaters to watch include Brooklee Han, siblings Brendan and Chantelle Kerry, Jaimee Nobbs, Oliver Porter & Mitchell Chapman.

For eight days in November and December, Melbourne hosted the Power Balance Australian Figure Skating Championships at the Icehouse, its \$58 million dual rink facility. 500 skaters took part

in this competition, earning personal bests and potential berths in international and championship competition. **aussieSKATES** reviews the event and our stars of tomorrow.

We also look at the recent remake of Ice Castles. Redesigned for today's audiences, it will surely build a following like the original film did 30 years ago.

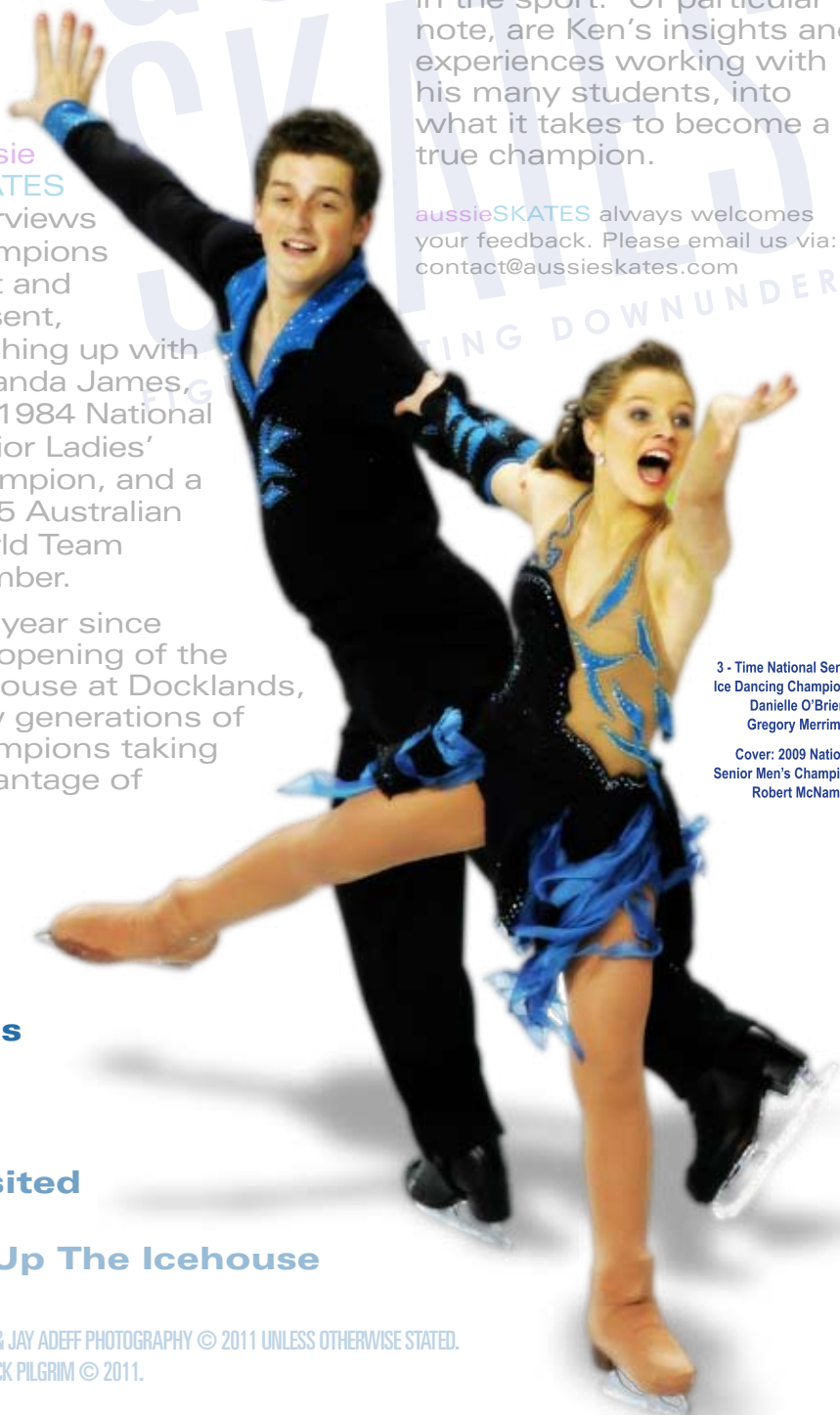
aussieSKATES interviews champions past and present, catching up with Amanda James, the 1984 National Senior Ladies' Champion, and a 1985 Australian World Team member.

In a year since the opening of the Icehouse at Docklands, new generations of champions taking advantage of

Victoria's skating resurgence include Novice Ladies' Champion, Cassidy - Rae Browell. **aussieSKATES** asks the young athlete what skating means to her.

Finally, internationally - renowned coach, Ken Congemi, part of the training team that took Evan Lysacek to Olympic gold in Vancouver, talks to us about his involvement in the sport. Of particular note, are Ken's insights and experiences working with his many students, into what it takes to become a true champion.

aussieSKATES always welcomes your feedback. Please email us via: contact@aussieskates.com



3 - Time National Senior Ice Dancing Champions, Danielle O'Brien & Gregory Merriman.

Cover: 2009 National Senior Men's Champion, Robert McNamara

In This Issue

- 3 Ken Congemi: It's All In The Mind**
- 8 Amanda James: Championship Memories**
- 12 Cassidy - Rae Browell: Her Journey Begins**
- 13 Ice Castles: An Instant Classic Revisited**
- 15 The Road to Nationals: Generation Next Heats Up The Icehouse**

IMAGES BY SUSAN D. RUSSELL (INTERNATIONAL FIGURE SKATING MAGAZINE) & JAY ADEFF PHOTOGRAPHY © 2011 UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED. CONTENT MANAGEMENT, GRAPHIC DESIGN, AND ALL ARTICLES WRITTEN BY NICK PILGRIM © 2011.

KEN CONGEMI IT'S ALL IN THE MIND



All photos: Ken Congemi

Ken, and student Evan Lysacek, celebrate a great performance together at the 2005 World Championships in Moscow, Russia.

For more than 30 years, Ken Congemi has worked with a steady stream of champions on both the national and global level. Some of his most recognised clients include the 2010 Olympic Men's Champion, Evan Lysacek, Takahiko Kozuka, Bebe Liang, Jennifer Kirk, Emily Hughes, and Timothy Goebel.

Last year on his first visit to Australia, Ken conducted a very successful seminar in Sydney. Also, the current National Junior Men's and Ladies' Champions, Brendan and Chantelle Kerry, recently returned from the United States after intensive training in California with Congemi. In this article, Ken happily offers helpful tips, whether for budding or seasoned elite skaters, aimed at what he feels it takes to achieve personal and competitive goals.

Starting in group lessons, Ken Congemi began skating when he was 9 years old.

Later that Christmas, he and his sister each got a pair of double runner skates. When she began taking classes, naturally, Ken wanted the same.

Soon, Congemi's sibling advanced to private lessons. Meanwhile, Ken would ask for money to play the rink's pinball machines, and to buy food from their snack bar.

Ken's parents quickly put an end to this, deciding it would be cheaper for him to skate more seriously as well. Looking back at their choice, Congemi laughs. They probably didn't realise it at the time, but in the long term, paying for both kids to skate and compete would cost them a lot more money.

This went on for many years.

As Ken advanced, skaters like Charlie Tickner, David Santee, Terry Kubika, & Scott Hamilton dominated the scene. Growing up, Tickner (the 4 – time U.S. and 1978 World Champion) was one of Ken's biggest skating idols.

As well as being a good jumper and spinner, Charlie flair really appealed to Congemi. Tickner's masculine, fluid style was something Ken really wanted to emulate.

Upon earning his gold test in 1980, Ken's involvement in coaching started to take off. He dabbled a little in teaching before heading off to Boston University. Once Ken got to Boston, Congemi quickly realised he didn't have much money left over to pay for text books and tuition fees. Teaching skating seemed like a logical way to offset those costs.

Soon, Ken started working with Teresa Martin, who was Nancy Kerrigan's first coach. At this stage Nancy was learning the double axel and the triple toe loop. Sometimes for fun, Kerrigan and Congemi would do side by side triple toe loops. Ken ended up knowing Nancy's family very well, and would sometimes go to their house for dinner.

Graduating with a degree in finance

Ken uses the example of a painter, that competitive skating is not only about achieving the end result. Instead, the artist should enjoy creating each brush stroke in order to put the final picture together.

(and a minor in psychology), Congemi however, continued to teach. Having developed a following, he was enjoying coaching too much to give it up. As a trainer, Ken was fulfilling many roles. Sometimes he felt like a parent, an advisor, and a cheerleader all rolled in one.

Ken also liked the technical aspect of coaching, and for the last ten years, has been working with Frank Carroll. With record that speaks for itself, Carroll trained such skaters as Linda Fratianne, Christopher Bowman, and

Michelle Kwan, to both national and global recognition.

Though Ken likes reinforcing good quality technique, motivating skaters is one of his strong suits. Congemi also helps his pupils make short and long term plans, sometimes creating weekly and even daily goals. The reason being, the days, weeks and the months pass very quickly, and all of a sudden, competition for the year starts all over again.

"It's easy to skate without "urgency" if there isn't a competition around the corner so Congemi reminds his students throughout the year that competition season will be here before they know it. This keeps them on track and helps them realize the reason they're trying to achieve the new jump or spin that they are working on. By preparing in this manner, Ken feels that much of the anxiety typically associated with competition can be avoided.

To achieve results, Ken has to stand firm. He insists on full out run-throughs; all jumps pulled in and all spins executed at the intended levels. Clean run-throughs are the ultimate goal and Ken reminds his students that the more clean programs they do in practice, the greater the chance of performing it this way in competition.

When a skater starts landing a jump in practice, perhaps a double axel or triple toe loop, Congemi will decide if it is ready for competition. If a championship is a month away, for example, Ken allows two weeks to decide whether including it is a viable option or not.

In terms of competition readiness, Ken and his student examine

progress against a spread sheet containing all of the short/long program elements the skater intends to perform. Students are expected to run a program or more on each session skated, a top athlete should be doing two longs and a short or two shorts and a long each day. The skater checks off elements completed on the "run-through spreadsheet" that way they can quickly look at how the athlete is doing in terms of consistency and possible problem elements.

Congemi also likes the idea of pursuing the sport for the process, something he talks about a lot with his students. Ken uses the example of a painter, that competitive skating is not only about achieving the end result. Instead, the artist should enjoy creating each brush stroke in order to put the final picture together.

Regarding skating skills, Ken firstly gets his students to understand the technique he is imparting. Secondly, he reinforces body awareness. This is to help athletes feel what they are doing, correctly hitting the positions he is teaching. Thirdly, the follow through is that Congemi's pupils can apply this knowledge to any jump or spin they have been working on.

According to Ken, there are no miracles on the day of competition. Or, that the stars happen to be in alignment in order to achieve optimal performance. In the lead – up to the Olympic Winter Games in

Vancouver, Congemi watched Evan Lysacek do clean run – throughs every single day, day after day. Therefore, it came as no surprise to see the skater reproduce that form in competition.

So, standing there at centre ice, there is no fooling the little voice. Deep down, a skater knows whether they have done their homework or not. Practice the way you want to



A proud Ken looks on as Bebe Liang from the USA, acknowledges the crowd after a good skate

perform, or conversely, you perform the way you practice. Imparting this advice, Ken adds, there is no way around it. "You gotta do your run – throughs."

Congemi doesn't ask his skaters to perform back to back programs in practice. Instead, he shakes things up by getting them to skate a full run - through, then afterwards, perhaps a section of the program. Sometimes he will get his pupils to skate the middle and the end of a program, followed by the beginning, versus running a program from beginning

to end. According to Congemi, not only does this shuffle things around, the approach prevents a program's finale from getting the short end of the stick.

Doing drills and simulating six minute warm - ups are all part of training. Ultimately, it is about going above and beyond what is required. This is particularly important in competition where maintaining focus, and

keeping performance levels up, are key. Even in the week of competition, Congemi gets his skaters to do full run throughs, exactly as they would in practice. So, if their plane has landed that day in another country, and there is a practice later in the evening, there is no reason not to take advantage of it.

Ken tells his skaters that if they are prepared, they are allowed to feel good about it. Otherwise, at this level it is virtually impossible to fake one's way through competition.

Congemi opines that 'popping' (when a skater subconsciously aborts a jump and turns a triple or quadruple jump into a double or a single) is epidemic. He sees this all the time. Therefore, during practice, he is adamant that his skaters commit to their jumps and pull in (to complete rotation).

Reinforcing that attack, gives his pupils the tools necessary for competition. If skaters don't allow themselves the option of popping in practice, when it comes to the pressure of competing, knowing there is that trust to fall back on, they

won't when it really matters.

Furthermore, Congemi stresses the importance of turning obstacles into opportunities. Ken uses the following example to make his point. Lysacek, arriving at practice one day, was really upset after both his wallet and cell phone had been stolen.

Reasoning that since Evan had called the phone and credit card companies to report the loss, there was nothing more Lysacek could do for the time being. However, Ken went on to say if his pupil could do a clean run – through right then, one day Evan could look back on the experience and think, wow, he was able to complete a great skate when things weren't going his way.

This makes sense when, at the Olympics, Lysacek pinned a postcard up in his bathroom that read, "Mind your own business." Congemi explains that he talks with his skaters about concentrating on what they need to do, instead of being distracted by situations going on around them.

Calling the issue 'truth' and 'story', Ken feels it is too easy to get involved in what everyone else is doing. The 'truth' is, skaters can do their double axels, triple toe loops, and perform clean run throughs. But, if athletes have other things playing through their heads at the same time, 'What if I don't win?' or "What if she beats me.", it isn't going to work.

As an absolute, circle one is the truth, the black and white. Can a skater perform the elements they have been practising? Can they do a clean run - through? On the other hand, all of the distracting variables or 'what ifs?', are in

circle two or the 'story'.

Often, what Ken sees, is those two circles tend to collapse on top of each other. Skaters end up seeing the 'truth' but through the lens of the 'story'. Instead, Ken encourages his students to separate those two circles of thought, and focus on the 'truth'.

In order to concentrate solely on performance, Congemi trains skaters to not only flex and grow their minds, but to strengthen them as well. Using the analogy that going to a gym and building muscles will make you stronger, Ken applies the same principle to mental preparation.

When faced with perceived obstacles, Ken asks that a skater not back down from these road blocks. Instead, it is an opportunity to turn a negative into a positive. Congemi asks his athletes to create a mind set that pushes boundaries beyond one's comfort zone. The reward is that skaters can look back on these experiences, as situations where they are able to create a success when things were going against them.

Ken relays the example about one of his skaters who was in tears, frustrated that she was never going to get her double axel. He laughs that it is a jump that can do that to anyone. However, Ken's gut instinct told him that she would get it. Explaining to her that, having coached for 30 years, she merely had to enjoy the process. Ken helped his student understand, each day she was simply nipping away at it. The result being, two months later, she has the most gorgeous double axel and is now working towards the triple toe loop.

Ken likes to inspire his skaters by sharing stories of how past champions have overcome adversity. He tells the story of Paul Wylie...

Paul Wylie, the 1992 Olympic Men's runner - up in Albertville, struggled with his triple axel in the final free skating warm - up. It is a jump the American skater had been landing consistently in France, and for weeks prior to the Games.

Knowing he could do it, Paul left the ice, finding a place by himself to regroup and concentrate on the 'truth'. Refusing to let his performance in the warm - up affect him, that things weren't working, Paul went out and landed two triples axels, clinching the silver medal. Congemi tells these stories prior to competition to help a skater see the possibilities of what they can achieve.

Once competition is over, Ken likes to sit down with his skater and talk it through. While the event is still fresh in both their minds, his aim is to get a clearer picture of what the skater was thinking. What did and didn't work, and what they were doing to stay focussed? Congemi also encourages his skaters to keep a journal, and to write notes after a competition.

Another story Ken tells, is about the skater who inflicted a lot of drama on herself, but ended up doing really well. Asking her to write down what went on prior to and at the event, next time she could use this as a reminder. That is, to achieve such a positive outcome, she didn't need to put herself through any more pain. Learning by example allows a skater to understand what does and doesn't work, what's necessary or not.

Ken's thoughts on the current judging system are that, whatever format is in place at any particular time, it is up to both the coach and the skater to understand it. Whether it is the 6.0 or IJS (International Judging System) being used, success is based on how well the team adheres to that system's requirements.

With IJS, Congemi's job is to figure out a way to gain as many points for his skaters as possible. Particularly, as the ISU (International Skating Union) issues many scoring updates throughout the year. Thus, strategy is key, and it is important for both Ken and his pupil to be on the same page. This is to make sure they don't miss any new IJS rule changes.

Congemi will also talk to his skaters about their off-ice training, whether this includes gym workouts, ballet and jazz class. He also discusses their costuming and music. Regarding nutrition, Ken covers specific issues such as glycemic index, glycogen loading, sipping regimens with carb rich drinks, and hydration.

Leaving as few variables to chance, there is a lot that goes into the making of an elite skater. The more that a team is on top of everything, the more they can groom a stronger athlete.

Prior to Congemi visiting Australia, both Brendan and Chantelle Kerry (the current National Junior Men's and Ladies' Champions) trained with him in California. Though Congemi hasn't had a lot of experience working with Australian skaters, Ken got to help quite a few at his recent seminar hosted in Sydney.

For Congemi, it is always exciting to see the look on a skater's face when

they have understood and achieved something new. Working in Australia with groups of ten skaters one after the other, there is one experience Ken remembers with fondness. During a particular changeover, one of the participants raised her hand, stating that she hadn't had her turn yet.

In order to concentrate solely on performance, Congemi trains skaters to not only flex and grow their minds, but to strengthen them as well. Using the analogy that going to a gym and building muscles will make you stronger, Ken applies the same principle to mental preparation.

As she prepared to demonstrate a double lutz, her face turned bright red. Not only would she be showing her group this jump, but the next set of skaters waiting by the boards as well. Feeling pressure, not surprisingly, she popped the jump.

Taking the skater aside, Ken completely understood her situation. Not only did he realise she had to perform for her peers on that

session, the group preparing for the next slot became another variable to consider, too. Breaking down her thoughts, Congemi got her to concentrate on technique, preparation and set-up for the jump, rather than the chatter going on in the skater's head.

The result?

She landed the jump in front of everybody, and had a huge smile on her face. For Ken, it was also a big moment. Not only would the skater remember this, it is a situation she will be able to draw on for future reference. Though it could have gone the other way, Congemi gave her the tools she needed.

Congemi has had many proud moments and achievements as a coach. Students include Nick LaRoche and Christopher Toland, both Junior Men's Champions of the United States.

Of Toland, when the skater was interviewed by media prior to the event, the reporter reminded him that he was fourth the previous year. Asked how he would do, Christopher said without hesitation, "I'm going to win."

Ken has created a system that allows skaters a belief in their own ability. Not only does Congemi create champions within the sport, it is an approach that can be applied to the challenges we face in everyday life.

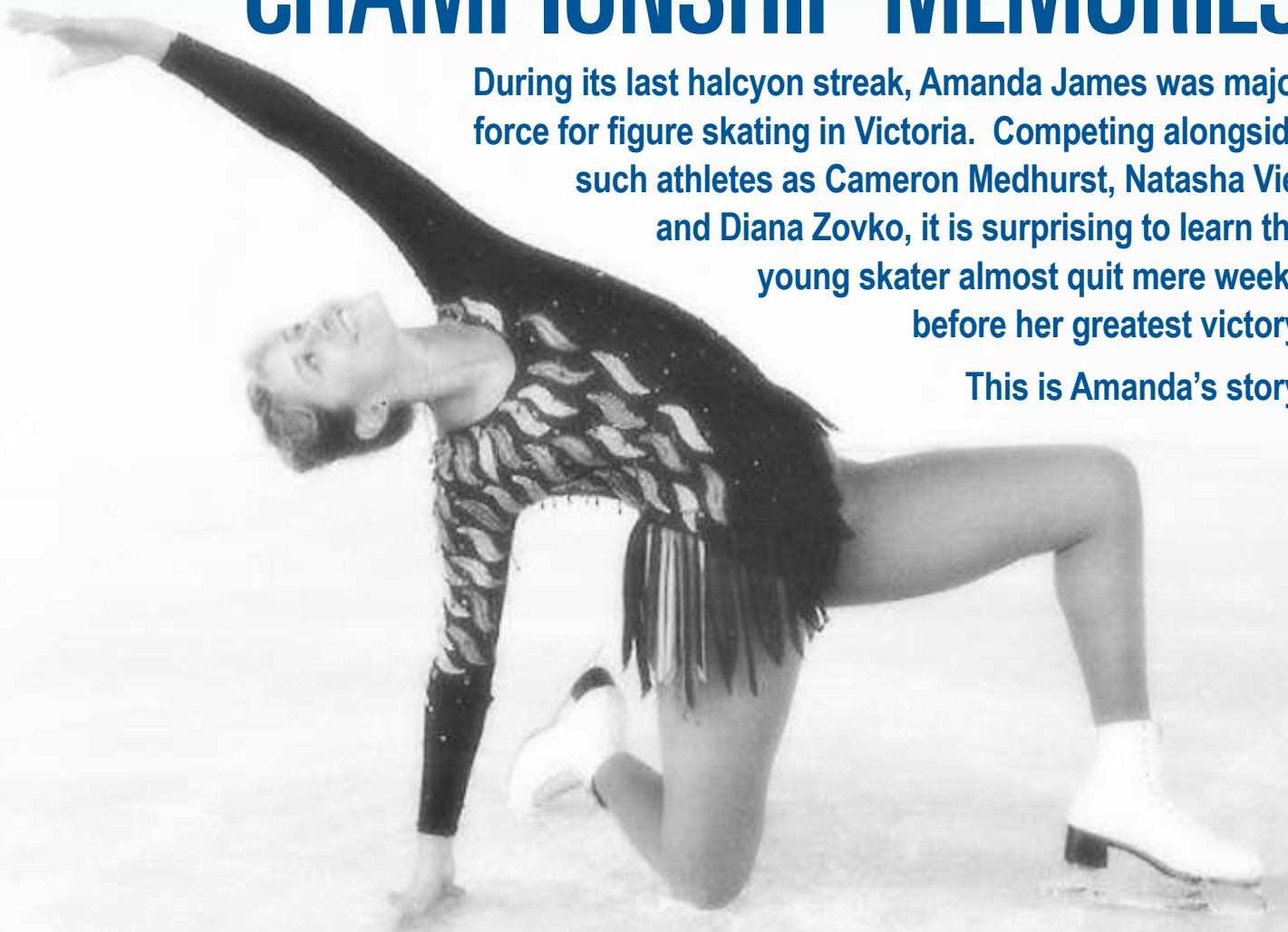
For further information about Ken, or if you would like to get in touch with him about his workshop series, go to www.kencongemi.com

AMANDA JAMES

CHAMPIONSHIP MEMORIES

During its last halcyon streak, Amanda James was major force for figure skating in Victoria. Competing alongside such athletes as Cameron Medhurst, Natasha Viel and Diana Zovko, it is surprising to learn the young skater almost quit mere weeks before her greatest victory.

This is Amanda's story.



Like many elite athletes in the sport, Amanda James started early. She was seven years old.

As a youngster, her introduction to skating began when she joined her brother and sister for a public session one Saturday afternoon. James remembers hundreds of people going around on the ice. She was so excited to get out there, Amanda remembers not really needing the barrier for assistance at all.

Quickly hooked, James asked her parents if she could go again. Seeing how crowded conditions were, one of their concerns was if she fell, her hands could be sliced by someone else's blades. Their solution was to book Amanda in for a few lessons instead.

From here, she advanced quickly.

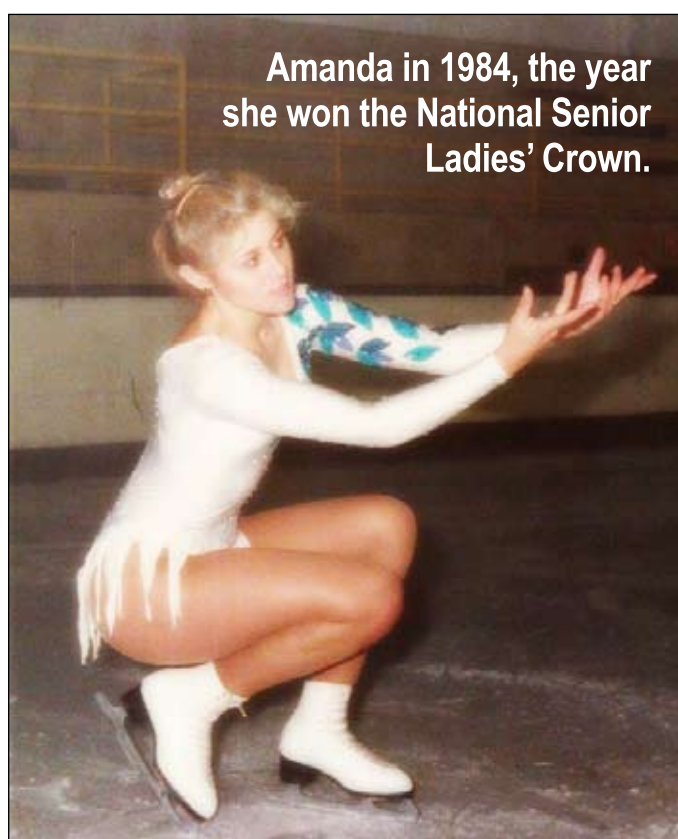
Learning her first jump, the waltz, Amanda would keep going around in circles, attempting one after another until she could master it. Looking back, it was like that with every new jump or spin she tried.

At the time, Amanda was only skating once a week. She begged her parents to let her go twice a week. Eventually, this increased until she was at the rink every day. It was in her blood; she couldn't get enough.

Her training schedule meant getting up at four in the morning to be on the

ice by five. Amanda would train until 10:30 am Monday to Friday. Then, in the afternoons, she would return to the rink and practice again from 3:45 until 6pm.

Around the time she won both the Victorian and Australian Juvenile Championships, at 13, Amanda became serious about her skating goals and ambitions. Spending little time in the Novice Division, the young skater jumped from Juvenile



to the Junior ranks pretty quickly.

Then, two years later after passing her gold test in school figures, Amanda became a senior level skater. "I was so busy," she admitted, "I never did get to my Gold Free Skating test until much later."

Back then, since compulsories were such an important part of competition, more than half of her

day was dedicated to them. Unlike a lot of gifted free stylists similar to herself, Amanda grew to love tracing continuous circles and figure eights on the ice.

During this time, her teachers included Margot Hall, followed by Aileen Nash, a 1960 Winter Olympian from Squaw Valley.

Of Nash, Amanda was constantly amazed that Aileen could take apart even the smallest technical faults and fix them. It was this dedication that inspired James to become a coach herself, (rather than head into show skating) once her competitive days wrapped up.

Eventually, she was taught by the 1979 Australian Senior Ladies' Champion, Belinda Noonan (nee Coulthard). Skating at (the now defunct) Iceland rink in Ringwood for most of her career, Amanda also spent a year in Sydney training with Noonan.

During her amateur days, Amanda also worked in the United States with esteemed coaches, John Nicks, in Santa Monica, California, and Ron Luddington, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

It comes as no surprise that Amanda, not having a specific skating idol growing up, cites Tai Babilonia and Randy Gardner, the 1979 World Pairs' Champions who trained with Nicks, as the most amazing (pairs') skaters she knew.

“They had so much grace, and were so polished. They just had this ability to make everything look so easy,” Amanda states. “They were very dedicated, and had the most amazing work ethic, which is why they succeeded. However, they just had the most wonderful charm. So they were for me, very inspirational.”

When it came to music, Amanda always chose works that allowed her to express her feelings. Losing herself in the music, James explains, “has got to be one of the most soul - moving experiences.”

Always passionate about her choices, some of James’ favourite pieces to skate to included Dancing in the Big City by Bill Conti, Love over Gold by Dire Straights, and Music was my First Love by John Miles.

Off - ice training included working with the nationally - renowned prima ballerina, Kathy Gorham. Through Kathy, Amanda was able to learn triple jumps, first on the floor, before transferring them to the ice.

James recalls Gorham being the most elegant woman. “She had charm and grace, and the most wonderful wisdom. I will never forget her, and the great lessons about life she taught me.”

Running with her dad, taking aerobics classes, and lifting weights in the gym was also part of James’ off - ice routine.

Later in her career, Amanda worked with a man named Rudy Webster. He was a radiographer

James met after she broke her ankle. It was such a severe injury, most people thought Amanda would never skate again. However, with Rudy’s help, she was able to come back. With his background also in sports psychology, Webster gave Amanda the tools for continuing.

Some of these tips included visualising what she doing on the ice, but as an outside observer. If something was being done wrong, he suggested Amanda go to the barrier, shut her eyes, and ‘play a movie’ to remind herself how to do it correctly.

Every night before going to sleep, she would continue this positive reinforcement, doing the same jumps, spins and figures in her head.

To make sure her body was set - up properly before performing jumps, Amanda taught herself to use key words. Particularly for some of the harder jumps, doing this proved very useful.

Instead of trying to remember all of the steps leading up to a jump, Amanda would use this single prompt as a trigger. Though it took a lot of practice to automatically place her body in the right position, James likens this approach to computer programming. It is an application she suggests, could also be used in preparation for actual competition.

For James, one memory of her career stands out above all.

In her last competitive year, nothing was going right. Plagued by injury

and illness, Amanda felt like she was always playing catch - up.

Losing the qualifying event before Australian Nationals, being runner - up at the Victorian State titles was a huge blow to her confidence. After this failure, Amanda sat herself down and wondered if it was worth continuing.

On the verge of quitting, only strong words from her coach snapped James out of it. When Belinda Noonan rang and stated bluntly, that if Amanda threw away 14 years of hard work to quit now, the skater would regret this decision for the rest of her life. As much as James wanted to hang up the phone, deep down, Amanda knew her trainer was right.

Relighting the competitive fire within, James put together a plan to help win the national senior crown. Knowing victory would send her to the 1985 World Championships later that season in Tokyo, Amanda took what Rudy Webster had given her, and shifted it to higher level.

Arriving at the rink two hours earlier before the other skaters got there, every morning Amanda would secretly simulate a world championship environment.

Firstly, if necessary, she would spray the ice with water. Then, Amanda would allot herself 15 minutes to practice compulsory figures, choosing a different group to run through each day. After that, she would skate her short and long programs, preceding each with the required six minute warm - up.

On day one of her new plan,

Amanda remembers being nervous to the point of shaking. So real was this mental preparation, she even imagined the judges waiting by for James to trace her first school figure.

As the weeks went on, to help herself relax, Amanda would visualise them wearing all sorts of weird outfits. Even, she laughs, them standing there in spotted underwear.

Soon, Amanda's rekindled drive paid off with gold at the National Championships. Her dream of representing Australia in Japan was now a reality.

Adjusting to the pressure - filled environment of international competition, however, Amanda's focus was severely tested in Tokyo. Her practices at the World Championships, she admits, were simply terrible. Nothing seemed to work. Adding to her misery, James' least favourite group of compulsory figures was also drawn.

Less than thrilled about this news to say the least, competition day came and her 15 minute warm - up was a disaster. Now more than ever, Amanda really needed to draw on everything those daily run - throughs had ingrained in her. Knowing she was next up to trace her school figure, James was trembling. She had to keep

repeating to herself that she knew what to do.

Well, a funny thing happened out there.

Standing centre ice with the judges surrounding her, Amanda suddenly recognised some of them. Starting to chuckle, you guessed it, James imagined them in their underwear.

With her mental conditioning

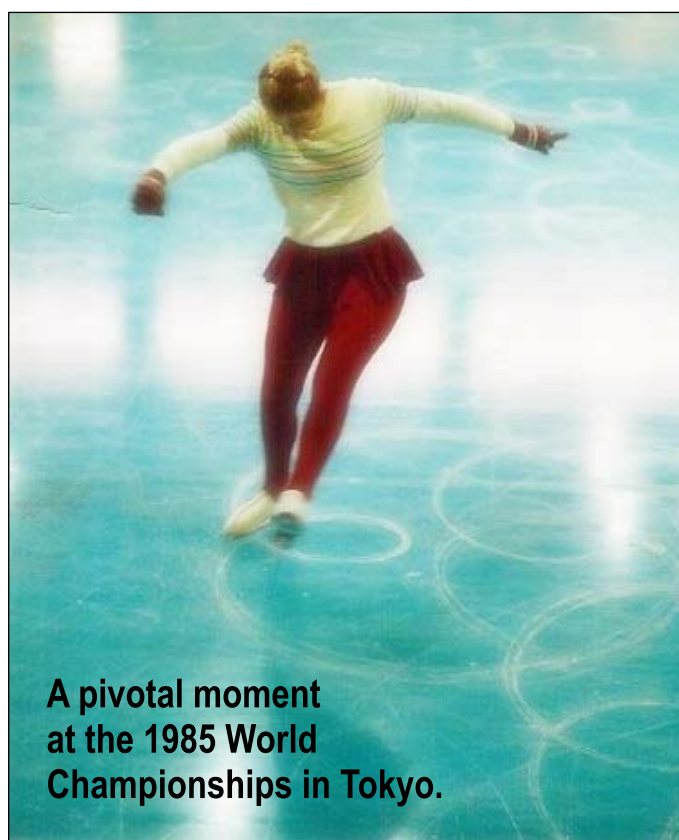
where she placed that day. God knows those judges, Amanda admits, had no idea where to position an Australian with excellent school figures.

What mattered most, was what she achieved. From that day, James understood that there are only two challenges in life. Firstly, to get up every day to do what needs to be done in order to meet your goals. Or, to live with the pain of regret, and that price is just too high.

Looking back, not only was this one of the highlights of her career, it was responsible for shaping James' attitude from there on.

Blessed for the lessons in life she has learned from skating, James believes that skating, as any sport that stretches and tests your ability, can teach you so much. It is not luck that gets you to the top but determination, dedication, and the decision to succeed.

From time to time, as Amanda herself has been heard to say, "You will find me at the top or dead on the side trying."



A pivotal moment at the 1985 World Championships in Tokyo.

kicking in, the nerves settled and Amanda knew she had them beat.

Going on to skate the strongest compulsories of her life, Amanda was awarded personal best scores. That day in fact, the audience gave her a standing ovation, something rarely if ever seen during school figures.

It wasn't important to James

KASSIDY - RAE BROWELL

HER JOURNEY BEGINS

The state of Victoria once led the vanguard in Australian skating, producing many champions that represented the sport on both the national and international stage. When all but one of the its rinks closed, potential medal opportunities ground to a standstill.

Now, with the opening of the Medibank Icehouse, Victorian skating is experiencing a renaissance, with Kassidy - Rae Browell an integral part of that rebirth.

Fifteen year old Kassidy - Rae Browell's first memories of her chosen sport were clear.

"My Grandparents are the reason I began. They live in Adelaide, and came to Bendigo during the Summer holidays. It was a hot day, and Pa suggested going ice skating."

Soon, Kassidy was enrolled in Aussie Skate (a skills - based group program). By the age of eight two years later, she was taking private lessons. Thanks to that chance visit to the rink, the young Victorian has been in love with the sport ever since.

When she first started skating, Browell would watch a lot of skating movies, ice shows and competitions on TV. She still does. Her idols include Sasha Cohen, Philippe Candeloro, and more recently, YuNa Kim and Evgeni Plushenko.

Until her training base two hours from Melbourne closed last year, Kassidy skated at the Bendigo Ice Arena. Though she commutes from regional Victoria five days a week, Browell now trains full time at the world class Icehouse facility in Docklands.

Kassidy's support team includes two coaches, Dorothy Bisset and Melina Simjanovic. She is also choreographed by Bisset and Kristen Anderson.

Browell likes skating to many different styles of music, including classical works, tangos, flamencos and jazz. It is no coincidence that this season, Kassidy - Rae is skating to a Spanish theme free program. Selecting music is a joint effort between Browell, her coaches and her choreographers. She and her team have an input into what best suits her skating. Depending on the pieces she is using, Kassidy - Rae, if not taking on a particular character, uses her skills to interpret the music.

In the month leading up to competition, Kassidy's training will increase along with her off ice preparation. For the week prior, her training regimen is more moderate to assist with faster performance recovery. Off ice activities include going to the gym in Bendigo, the ASM, and the Icehouse. Kassidy also does dance training that helps increase her jumping ability.

As part of her mental preparation, Kassidy also works with a sports psychologist.

Her strategies include listening to music, visualising both her programs, their elements, and stepping through them off ice. Kassidy also does a lot of deep breathing exercises to help her relax.

Career highlights include winning primary silver at the 2008 Australian

Championships. The result was particularly memorable, as the Bendigo rink closed for approximately six months, hindering her training.

Once it re-opened, Kassidy had barely a month back on the ice before the Victorian State Championships, the pre-qualifying event for Nationals. "This (winning the silver) was by far my favourite moment, as I realised that even after only 10 weeks of training you can still fight for and achieve your goals."

Though Browell's short terms plans always seem to change when she learns a new spin or jump, her ongoing goals include aiming to represent Australia in international competition. Eventually, she would like to train and compete overseas and become involved in ice shows.

When this interview took place, Kassidy - Rae was still working on her programs in preparation for the National Championships. Her joy was obvious. "I am extremely excited to finally have a National Championships held in Victoria, and even better where I train."

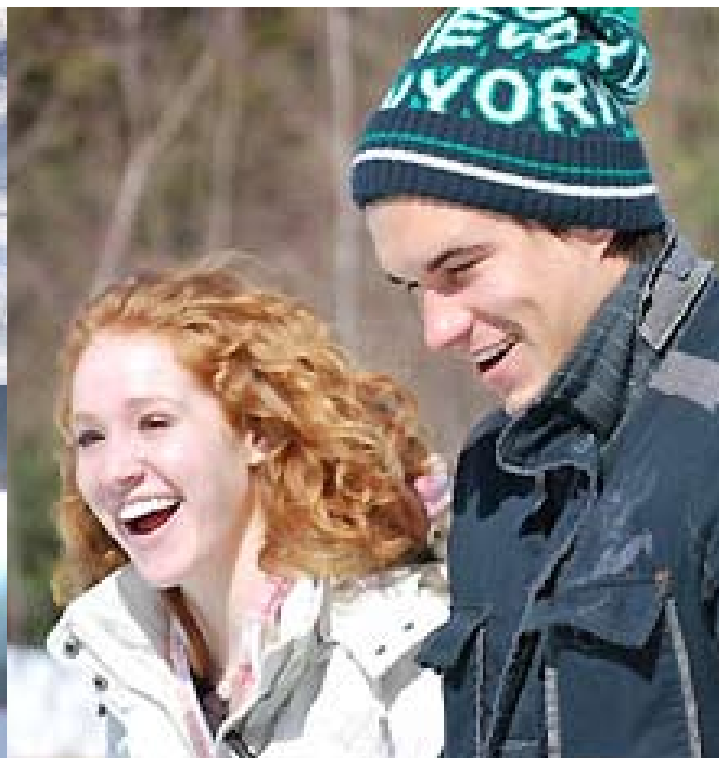
For anyone thinking of trying the sport, Kassidy - Rae's advice is, don't be scared. "Have a go. You will love it. Just take your time, and enjoy the experience."



Photo credit: De Groot Photography

ICE CASTLES

AN INSTANT CLASSIC REVISITED



All photos: Sony Pictures

In 1979, Columbia Pictures created what can be defined as the quintessential 'date movie'. With winning ingredients to spare, *Ice Castles* ticked all of the right boxes. Combining fast action sports sequences, intense rivalries, first romance, and heart - wrenching tragedy, the film made Robbie Benson, Colleen Dewhurst, and Tom Skerritt household names.

Lynn Holly Johnson, only nineteen at the time, played the pivotal role of Lexi, the promising teen athlete blinded in a freak accident. Herself a former skating champion, Johnson radiated the perfect balance of vulnerability, grit and determination, giving the melodrama a firm footing in reality. Now, thirty years later, the film's original director, Donald Wrye, returns to *Ice Castles* once more.



An interesting back story preceded the new production of *Ice Castles*.

Taylor Firth, who plays Lexi not as a willowy blonde, but a fiery red head, almost didn't win this once in a life time opportunity. Herself a nationally ranked star, when an email requesting Firth audition for the movie, sat in the junk mail folder of her account, she almost unknowingly deleted it.

Unlike a lot of remakes (the 1978 movie is reviewed by Cathy Williams in our Winter 2008 issue), *Ice Castles* is not a scene for scene rehash. Major location and cosmetic changes have been made to the updated script. Where the historic Broadmoor Arena in Colorado Springs, Colorado, was a centerpiece to the action, here, Boston, Massachusetts becomes Lexi's new training ground.

Fans old enough to remember the original film, will notice many differences here. Lexi's spunky sidekick, Sandy, has gone. Cecile Mochet, the French world champion who has a breakdown on national television, is also absent. Annette Brashlow, the girl standing between Winston and her Olympic dreams, has been replaced by a new arch - rival, Carrie Turner.

Played by Molly Oberstar, also a competitive skater in real life, Turner's presence is particularly significant. She too was once guided by Winston's new coach, driven star maker Aiden Reynolds, played by Morgan Kelly.

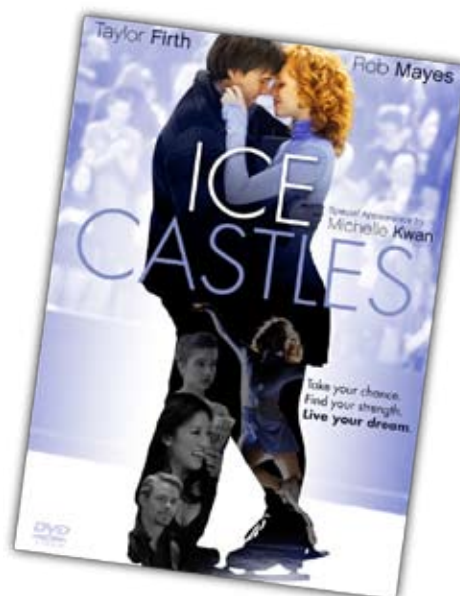
Where the 1978 film had a female actress playing Lexi's powerhouse trainer, reinventing the role using a man completely changes the dynamic shared by coach and student. Sparked by the dual pressures of elite training and competition, there is a lot of tension evident between the two characters.

The one key role that has stayed intact is Winston's boyfriend, Nick. Possibly the most complex character in *Ice Castles*, played by Rob Mayes, Nick's motivation switches between puppy dog infatuation, jealous disappointment, and finally, rock - solid acceptance, love and support. Scenes shared by Mayes and Firth are particularly moving.

Ice Castles is a good family viewing, with rookies Firth and Oberstar, standing tall along side a group of veteran actors. Special appearances by world champion, Michelle Kwan, and commentator and choreographer, Sandra Bezic, add to the legitimacy of this production.

One small criticism however, is while Lexi's rise takes up significant screen time to develop, (a full hour to be exact), her accident and rehabilitation is allocated less than half that. It would have been nice to see Winston's comeback explored in a little more detail. Nevertheless, deleted scenes included in the DVD presentation do make up for this loss.

Ice Castles is distributed on DVD through Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Australia.



GENERATION NEXT HEATS UP THE THE ICEHOUSE

Over eight exciting days from November 25 until December 2, more than 500 skaters converged on Melbourne's Medibank Icehouse for the Power Balance 2010 Australian Figure Skating Championships. A decade in the making, this world - class dual rink facility is not only a vital key to rejuvenating figure skating interest in Australia, it is also home to both the Olympic Winter Institute and the Australian Winter Olympic Sports Commission.

Athletes of all ages and levels competed in ladies' and men's singles, pairs, dance and synchronised events. Categories ranged from adult and open competitions to championship intermediate, primary, novice, junior and senior divisions.

The week showcased a lot of talent, both veteran and new to the national scene.

Continuing a family tradition, Katie Pasfield skated a theatrical pair of performances to make her dad and coach, former National Senior Men's champion, Michael Pasfield, very proud. She won the Primary Ladies' title with ease.

With extensive training in the United States paying off, Kailani Kraine from NSW held off New Zealand's Iyrin Quigley to win the Novice Ladies division. Another name to watch, Victoria's Alex Dillon, moved up from winning Primary Men in 2009, taking the Novice title.

The junior ladies will be remembered as a cliffhanger, with the final outcome not known until the last skater performed.

Following the short program, Chantelle Kerry of NSW was leading the event, with Victoria's Brooklee Han, close behind in second. Han, who holds dual citizenship, trains for most of the year in the United States. Though her free program included three solid triple jumps, several jumping errors and omissions cost the 15 year old valuable points.

Kerry, the daughter of 1988 Winter Olympian and coach, Monica McDonald, capitalised on solid presentation skills. Skating well until a freak mid - program tumble on some backwards footwork, it was initially thought Chantelle may need to withdraw. Stopping the clock while Kerry regrouped, the skater displayed an inner toughness, finishing her skate with a series of difficult spins and jumps to clinch the title. The two - time defending champion, Jaimee Nobbs, finished third.

Brendan Kerry (older brother of Chantelle)

took the junior men's title, also in nail - biting fashion. Kerry made some serious jump errors, and was only third in the free skate. Seven points clear of the competition after round one, Brendan won the competition on the strength of his short program.

This was barely enough to hold off Oliver Porter, the 2009 Australian Men's Novice Champion, who finished first in the free skate. Landing three easy triples in his long program, the youngster from Western Australia skated with determination and drive. Other athletes to watch include Queensland's David Kranjec and Harley Dahlstrom from NSW.

Three - Time and defending National Senior Dance Champions, Danielle O'Brien & Gregory Merriman continue to improve not only as a team, but in their dance skills and presentation. They now train for part of the year in the United States with Pasquale Camerlengo.

A strong short dance skated to *Dancin' Fool* and the waltz from *Cousins*, combined with an equally entertaining free program to *The Informant*, will surely make an impact on the international circuit and move them up in ISU World rankings.

In the Senior Men's category, Mark Webster, runner - up for the past two seasons, won his first national title.

Webster skated a clean short program to the *Sherlock Holmes* soundtrack. He followed this up with a free skate to the music of Wolfman, including six triple jump attempts. Of note, Mark was also given credit for the triple axel, a jump he had been landing in practice. Training in Canada for part of the year, it is surely a matter of time before Mark nails the jump in competition.

After a disappointing short program which left him in fourth place, the defending champion, Robert McNamara, fought back to win the silver medal. On the senior podium for the first time, and moving up from sixth place in 2009, bronze went to Mitchell Chapman.

Competition ended with the ladies' senior event, with NSW earning a clean sweep of the podium. Gold went to Phoebe Di Tommaso, with silver and bronze to Jessica Kurzawski and Albrina Lee respectively.

2010 Winter Olympian, Cheltzie Lee, though she was training for Nationals in Melbourne all week, was unfortunately forced to withdraw due to injury. Though her short and long programs this year were choreographed by Robin Cousins, the 1980 Olympic Men's Champion from Great Britain, the defending ladies' champion had been out of action for most of the season. Lee however, maintained her fitness with intensive off - ice training.

At press time, Lee was back on the ice in preparation for the upcoming Four Continents Championships in Chinese Taipei, the key qualifying event for Worlds in Tokyo, Japan.



For the 2011 season, Cheltzie's short and long programs have been choreographed by Robin Cousins.

Primary Ladies		State
1	Katie Pasfield	NSW
2	Jenny Lu	QLD
3	Eiland Kenyon	ACT
4	Amelia Jackson	QLD
5	Dilli Kenyon	ACT
6	Kirsten Hargreaves	NSW
7	Ammellia Fu	NSW
8	Sarah Molinari	ACT
9	Sarah Carneiro	VIC
10	Veera Kestila	NSW
11	Yancey Chan	QLD
12	Guilia Marrama	QLD
13	Tanya Carneiro	VIC
14	Serena Xu	NSW
15	Preeya Laud	NZL
16	Aleisha Chadbourne	QLD
17	Tahli Gill	QLD
18	Abbey Miller	NZL
19	Jessica Polley	NSW
20	Kelli Zhao	NSW
21	Zoe Rollo	NSW
22	Ashley Colliver	SA
23	India Nette	SA
24	Summer Carlson	VIC
25	Chelsea McCann	WA
Primary Men		State
1	Darian Kaptich	QLD
2	William Badaoui	NSW
3	Devlin Scott	QLD
4	Giuseppe Triulcio	SA
Primary Dance		State
1	Veera Kestila / Thomas Masters	NSW
2	Alexandra Middleton / Mark Messer	NSW
Primary Pairs		State
1	Rhianon Reese / Joshua Broad	SA
2	Emma Greensill / Matthew Dodds	QLD
Intermediate Ladies		State
1	Zoe Cameron - Brown	NZL
2	Madison Murray	SA
3	Katie McNabb	QLD
4	Stephanie Miles	WA
5	Andriana Fu	NSW
6	Rikkilee Smith	QLD
7	Amelia Keating	QLD
8	Justine Thornton	ACT
9	Emily Thomson	NSW
10	Tanya Chamberlain	QLD
11	Brianna Challingsworth	NSW
12	Ashleigh Mansell	ACT
13	Rhianon Reese	SA
14	Rachel Wood	VIC
15	Paige Sawyers	NSW
16	Katie Francis	ACT
17	Jennifer Toms	WA
18	Sheridan Murray	SA
19	Chelsea Richdale	NZL
20	Christine Toms	WA
21	Jade Watters	NSW
22	Deborah Toms	WA
23	Hana Nomura	QLD
24	Katrina Norwood	SA
25	Natasha Hoggood	NSW
26	Charlotte Kesteven	ACT
27	Sarah Norris	VIC
Intermediate Men		State
1	Rafal Piwonski	NSW

Novice Ladies		State
1	Kailani Craine	NSW
2	Iyrin Quigley	NZL
3	Amy Newbery	SA
4	Ailie Yeh	NSW
5	Ada Wong	NSW
6	Kassidy - Rae Browell	VIC
7	Karen Ka	NSW
8	Bethany McMahon	ACT
9	Loretta Nguyen	NSW
10	Sarah Cullen	NSW
11	Emily Povey	QLD
12	Tara Amin	WA
13	Lauren Moore	SA
14	Rhianne Cook	WA
15	Madeline Cootes	NSW
16	Tayla Kearns	QLD
17	Hayley Jeffries	QLD
18	Hayley Van Der Zee	QLD
19	Sharni McPhee	QLD
20	Katie Whitten	QLD
21	Sarah MacGibbon	NZL
22	Liesda Marsdon	QLD
23	Michelle Toms	WA
Novice Men		State
1	Alex Dillon	VIC
2	Aravinda Rao	QLD
3	Callum Bullard	NSW
4	Joshua Broad	SA
5	Ryan Dodds	NSW
6	Andrew Taylor	VIC
7	Charlton Doherty	QLD
Novice Dance		State
1	Courtney Flynn / Callum Bullard	NSW
2	Matilda Friend / Patrick Adderley	NSW
Novice Pairs		State
1	Maggie O'Toole / Callum Bullard	NSW
Junior Ladies		State
1	Chantelle Kerry	NSW
2	Brooklee Han	VIC
3	Jaimee Nobbs	WA
4	Taylor Dean	QLD
5	Madelaine Parker	NZL
6	Kristin Secola	WA
7	Sydney Knight	NSW
8	Samantha Waugh	NZL
9	Jessie Park	NZL
10	Rebecca Dellaca	NSW
11	Karuna Henderson	ACT
12	Jessinta Martin	SA
13	Anna Dekany	QLD
14	Lowanna Gibson	NSW
15	Renee Hambly	NSW
16	Rebecca Seymour - Bernard	QLD
WD	Natalie Sullivan	QLD
WD	Melissa Tyson	SA
Junior Men		State
1	Brendan Kerry	NSW
2	Oliver Porter	WA
3	David Kranjec	QLD
4	Harley Dahlstrom	NSW
5	Bradley McLachlan	NSW
6	Jason Ren	NSW
7	Jordan Dodds	QLD
8	Cameron Hemmert	NSW
9	Lochran Doherty	QLD
10	Zachery Ockenden	QLD
11	Robert Ashman	ACT
12	Christopher Boyd	NZL
Junior Dance		State
1	Ayesha Campbell / Shane Speden	NZL
2	Kimberley Hew-Low / Cameron Hemmert	NSW

Senior Ladies		State
1	Phoebe Di Tommaso	NSW
2	Albrina Lee	NSW
3	Jessica Kurzawski	NSW
4	Aigul Kozhamkulova	QLD
5	Samantha Waugh	NZL
6	Kayla Doig	KAZ
7	Melissa Morris	NZL
WD	Cheltzie Lee	NSW
Senior Men		State
1	Mark Webster	NSW
2	Robert McNamara	QLD
3	Mitchell Chapman	QLD
4	Cameron Hems	NZL
5	Andrew Dodds	QLD
6	Bradley McLachlan	NSW
7	Matthew Dodds	QLD
WD	Blake Adams	NSW
Senior Dance		State
1	Danielle O'Brien / Gregory Merriman	NSW
2	Maria Borounov / Evgueni Borounov	WA
3	Katherine Firkin / Henri Dupont	VIC
Adult Synchronized		State
1	Chill Factor	QLD
2	Dominoes	NSW
3	Spectrum	NZ
4	Synchromesh	NSW
5	Organised Chaos	WA
6	Icy Chicks	NZ
7	Sync-On-Ice	NSW
Novice Synchronized		State
1	Iceskateers	QLD
2	Majestic Ice	NSW
3	Aurora	QLD
4	Jitterbugs	WA
Junior Synchronized		State
1	Iceskateers Elite	QLD
2	Infusion	WA
3	Fire on Ice Junior	NSW
Senior Synchronized		State
1	Fire on Ice	NSW
2	Nova	QLD
3	Adelaide Ice Magic	SA
Open Synchronized		State
1	Adelaide Iclice Magic	SA
2	Insync	NSW
3	Synchronicity	NSW
4	Synchro Saints	NSW
5	Mini Saints	NSW
Adult Ladies' Silver Division		State
1	Irene Koeltzch	GER
2	Margaret Riddington	VIC
3	Nicole Bateson	VIC
4	Renee Badcock	TAS
5	Jane Kahlbaum	SA
6	Lisa Davies	NSW
7	Deborah Howard	QLD
8	Jaye Brennan	WA
9	Sue Hoseit	NZL
10	Stephanie Huot	SA
11	Caren Caistor	NSW
12	Sherie-Lee Godfrey	QLD
Adult Men's Silver Division		State
1	Clarence Ong	WA
2	Brooke Crawford	NSW
Adult Dance Silver Division		State
1	Helen Beale / Brooke Crawford	NSW
Adult Ladies' Gold Division		State
1	Melissa Staples	NSW
2	Katherin Molnar	VIC
3	Yvonne Shubart	VIC
4	Pauline Wharton	QLD
Adult Ladies' Elite Division		State
1	Jane Ashworth	WA