

McBride takes third in international Irish Dance competition



By Brock Weir

Some people don't take the sting of defeat in their stride.

Others take it and parlay it into something more useful and productive.

Aurora's Lindsay McBride falls into the second camp. The 20 year old Irish Dancer recently placed third in the world in the International Irish Dancing Championships in Boston last month.

An enthusiastic and passionate dancer for over 16 years, Ms. McBride is no stranger to the international competitions. In the first year attending the competition in Ireland, she placed 27th. The next year she didn't place at all. The following year she came in 24th place, but dropped down to 40th place by the time of the 2011 competitions.

'Then I got really angry,' she says with a laugh. 'Then I worked really hard and got seventh last year and now third. Once I got that 40th, I realised I didn't like that and started to work that much harder. You use it as motivation to make you better. Sometimes if people do badly, they think, 'Oh, I suck!' or 'I'm not very good,' but you just have to use it to make you mad and then make you better.'

Ms. McBride, a native of Stouffville, moved to Aurora when she was in elementary school, attending Lester B. Pearson Public School and later Aurora High School. She first caught the Irish Dancing bug when she was just six, innocently spying a registration booth at Upper Canada Mall for the Newmarket-based Irish Dance Studio at Upper Canada Mall.

'I could do it!' she says of what initially sparked her imagination with the colourful and rhythmic performances. 'I could pick up the steps really easily. I had no troubles with remembering anything. I got it and I was good at it, I had lots of fun and it was just a passion that was found.'

From there, she branched out into gymnastics and ballet, and dancing is now practically second nature to her.

While her family was always supportive, she jokes that some members, including her grandparents, were initially skeptical of her dreams to become a professional dancer. All doubts were erased, however, once she returned home from Boston with her third place trophy.

Taking her skills abroad has not been limited to the international competitions in Ireland and Massachusetts. She has travelled extensively with some of her teammates throughout the United States, the British Isles, and parts of continental Europe. The trips,

she says, are a lot of fun and opportunities she would not have otherwise been able to take without her passion for Irish dancing, and also afford her the opportunities to see the unexpected.

‘In Ireland they like to busk,’ she recalls, admitting that coming to perform Irish dancing on the Irish home turf can be a somewhat intimidating and daunting prospect. ‘When you do downtown there are people everywhere doing the accordion dancing, I saw one guy playing the piano in the streets and crazy stuff like that. There is a feeling of going over and crossing an ocean to a different country that’s freeing.’

In preparing for her third place finish this year, Ms. McBride was determined to ensure that she stood out in the crowd. Having been in competition for so long, she was familiar with many of the people there and she could scope out the competition long before arriving in Boston. That too brings its own challenges. One of her chief competitors has gone head to head with her for over six years ago and everyone, she says, expects her to be good. Sometimes worry creeps in that the judges place certain familiar faces out of somewhat of a routine but she said she was quick to banish those thoughts and persevere.

‘I’m from Canada and people don’t really know who I am, so I have to be bigger and better able to get noticed,’ she says. ‘That is a hard thing to do when nobody knows who you are. I just wanted to be really good. I had worked really, really, really hard and my dance teacher (Emily Babbyn) has put so much work into helping me become the dancer I am. I never give up and just keep pushing no matter what. There is no massive thing I can do than just work really hard.’

Hard work aside, other factors helped her stand out, she says. This included a new wig that was more natural looking than the elaborate curls synonymous with Irish dancing, and a new dress. Costumes, she added, can be a challenge with the best of the best often clocking at over £1,200 a pop direct from Ireland but costing a bit extra for a little more bling.

‘I go in for the bling, the more bling the merrier!’

This combination of hard work, perseverance, a new look, and, of course, the bling all conspired to make for a highly successful competition.

‘Of course I wanted to win and of course I wanted to get top three, but I think being on the podium for now was a good goal because I had never been there before,’ she says. ‘I was really happy, my parents were really happy, and I think everyone was crying. It was exciting and random people I didn’t know were coming up to me and congratulating me. One thing I really like is appreciating the work I have done and knowing that other people appreciate it too.’

‘Now I want to win!’