

Blackpool Dance Festival has got to be the world's most prestigious ballroom dance competition. Beautiful floor and music, amazing atmosphere, great dancers and supportive audience. It is simply the best and Felix and I were lucky to experience it this year thanks to BBM.

We arrived in London on the 15th of May, a week before Blackpool Dance Festival. I must say, 22 hours of flight (although we stopped in Korea overnight) does wear you out so much but we decided to enter a competition, The Galaxy Imperial Championship at Gatwick, which was on the following day to give us a practice run before our big one. It was a crazy idea but we had to overcome the jet leg and more importantly we wanted to feel what dancing overseas is like and get some sort of idea for Blackpool. Although we've only danced one event, we knew what it's like dancing overseas. Pure competition. Everyone was very focused and determined. For us, it was so exciting to experience the different atmosphere of dancing and to be competing amongst it.

So every day to Blackpool, we went to Option Dance studio at Cheam for practice. There were morning and night practice sessions. Being close to Blackpool festival, the practice classes were packed of dancers each night and everyone was so determined, the atmosphere was even more intense compare to Australia. 100 or so couples sweating in the heated floor, some couples were discussing and some were arguing quite aggressively. During the 5 days of practicing at Cheam, we focused on OUR dancing as we didn't want to be influenced by other couples dancing.

Our very first Blackpool dance was on Day 1 of the competition which was 1st Qualifying round of Amateur Ballroom Rising Star. There were about 8 heats in the event compare to 3-4 heats at Australian Nationals, it was a completely different ball game. Strangely we were pretty calm as we only thought about our dancing. However, after our first dance, waltz, we were terrified and shocked. It was nothing like what we experienced and expected. People often say "Go enjoy your first Blackpool, it's amazing". Yes, it's amazing but you cannot enjoy a thing over there. It was like a war; the atmosphere on the actual dance floor was totally different. One thing we were certain of after the dance was that we need a proper strategy for the next event. Dancing just for ourselves wasn't enough, we had to compete against others too.

As the rounds and days continue, we witnessed some great dancing in both Latin and Ballroom and Youth, Amateur and Professionals. Even just watching them really inspired and guided us how we are going to pursue in the future. Youth couples had so much energy and enthusiasm to their dancing, it was great to see young couples producing good quality dance that everyone can learn from. Professionals were just breathtaking. Every movement were elegant and beautiful. We are certain that they inspired so many people on that day and it definitely did to us. It was different to what we've watched on videos online.

We've also attended to Blackpool Congress watching greatest dancers and teachers lecturing about their secrets to the success. They all talked from different perspective but

one thing in common was that we have to be motivated and be clear with what we are trying to achieve. In the end of the day it is us who will change the path.

Our journey did not end yet when we returned to London from the competition. 2 weeks of lessons with Richard and Anne Gleave was one of the most inspirational moments. It wasn't just a series of dance lessons; it was also a life lesson too. Not only in ours. They shared their knowledge, experience, values and even their personal stories with us; what inspired them, what made them become who they are now. It was just amazing learning from two of the most successful ballroom dancers. Being back in Australia, we are very excited to input and practice their knowledge into our dancing.

We had ups and downs, good times hard times but in the end, this journey was the greatest moment of our lives. It was full of learning, experience and inspiration. Not only our dancing as matured but us an individual, have we matured. We are very definite of our path. We believe it is the right path for us and after this amazing experience; we can't wait to take it further. It definitely was unforgettable moments and we cherished every moments of it.

We can't thank you enough for this wonderful opportunity. The support we received was amazing. We really appreciate it. Thank you to all.

Felix Park and Christina Park