

inside **DANCE**

FEB/MARCH 2020

1,2,3... **DCC!**

DALLAS COWBOYS CHEERLEADERS

Inside Dance got an exclusive invite for a behind-the-scenes look at the dynamic, driven dancing legends.



LINEUP

> > > > > >
FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020

28 1,2,3... DCC! BY CHRISTY SANDMAIER

Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders - *Inside Dance* takes you behind-the-scenes for this exclusive look at the driven, dancing legends.

40 CENTER STAGE STATEMENTS

Going fashion forward in 2020!

43 NEW YEAR TURNS & TRENDS

Our take on studio and stage trends for the new year and new season ahead!

50 LAS VEGAS BALLET BY CHRIS KOROTKY

Las Vegas Ballet Brings It to the Entertainment Capital of the World!

58 COMPANY SPOTLIGHT: LEGACY

All of the ins and outs of Legacy's rich history and plans for the future!

62 DANCE FITNESS FOR 2020!

Tegan Reeves talks optimal fitness for the dance floor.

PICTURE PERFECT

15 Photo Feature

65 Grand Finale

IN EVERY ISSUE

14 Advertiser Directory

18 Publisher's Page

20 iD Ambassadors

22 The Must List

25 New + Noteworthy

27 Scene + Media

ADVERTORIAL

37 Studio Connections

On the Cover:
Dallas Cowboys
Cheerleaders

PHOTO BY
JEREMY SHELBY
PHOTOGRAPHY

Pictured Here:
Victoria, Dallas
Cowboys
Cheerleaders

PHOTO BY
DEAN BURNS

"Dallas just seemed like Hollywood - the name in lights. I never felt such a fire in my heart to pursue something so passionately."

HEATHER
FOURTH YEAR

The Super Suit & The Legacy

There was a moment during last summer's Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders performance with music legend Queen that Maddie will never forget. "I've never met anyone so down to earth and humble as Brian May. And he was excited to meet *us*! That's the power of the uniform. I call it my super suit."

A fourth-year veteran out of Elite Dance Force in Utah who grew up in her Mom's dance studio, Maddie was raised a Cowboys fan and at one time worked six jobs prior to making the team. She says she truly lives in the moment now, recalling the night of July 23 as if it

were just yesterday, "To perform during The Rhapsody Tour in Dallas and hear the roar of the crowd was an amazing moment in time."

For certain, the uniform is recognized worldwide and the legacy has stood the test of time. The uniform itself stands in the Smithsonian Museum of History and the nearly 60-year DCC legacy is as rich and rewarding as any. But, the true story lies within each journey of each team member who wears that uniform. For Maddie, it was a journey she calls, "a puzzle that finally fit perfectly together."

It's together the women who perform as DCCs champion each other at every

turn. Among them are a studio owner, ballet instructor, full-time students pursuing graduate work, and full and part-time professionals in the areas of education, law, medicine, real estate, and more. They're intelligent, funny, warm, well-educated, beautiful women who cheer each other on - women supporting women at their very best during their utmost triumphs and challenges.

As dancers, their collective training rivals anyone in the world with styles reflecting an array of genres including contemporary, ballet, modern, jazz, hip hop, tap, Irish step dancing, precision drill team and even competitive Cheerleader. Their journey has taken them from studios

1,2,3... DCC!

Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders - Dancing Driven, Determined to Be Brave

BY CHRISTY SANDMAIER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEAN BURNS, JEREMIAH JHASS
AND BARRY BOWDEN FOR MIRACLE PRODUCTIONS, LLP

as children, to dance conservatories, competitive college dance teams, pom squads, a self-described “starving artist” finding her way through NYC, and several who performed with different NFL, NBA and NHL dance teams prior to punching their ticket for Dallas.

It’s completely designed that way. “We haven’t changed from discovering and developing performers that are very appealing to large stadium audiences, who demonstrate great precision, while at the same time maintaining their own style and charm that creates their own unique appeal,” says Kelli Finglass, who has directed the cheerleaders since 1991.

A DCC for five years, Finglass is a true

visionary. Her accomplishments, drive for perfection and passion for her job have lifted the organization to new heights - a sold-out collector’s edition DCC Barbie, countless television appearances all over the world, 83 USO Tours spanning 42 Countries, a Christmas show at The Star complete with an original score, and global recognition on CMT’s *Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making the Team*, entering its 15th season. Up next, Finglass says she’d love a star for the cheerleaders on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Then there was that performance with Queen. Finglass, an admittedly *huge* fan, said of the moment, “It was the ultimate.



When the girls came off the stage they were in tears, they were so truly excited. They got to feel like rockstars for three and a half minutes.”

There are 10 regular season games, but a year’s worth of opportunities and Finglass is constantly pushing the envelope in the pursuit of excellence. Especially when it comes to dance technique and performance level. Guest choreographers are brought in to keep things fresh, upbeat and fast even once football season is over. Super-stars across the

dance industry Travis Wall, Tyce Diorio, Evan Miller, Denise DiCharry, Charm La'Donna and Cheryl Burke have all been featured, bringing their art, and their advice, to the studio floor.

Side-by-side with Finglass is Judy Trammell, who cheered for the Cowboys 1980-84, became assistant choreographer in 1984 and was promoted to head choreographer in 1991. "I don't want the moves to be dated," says Trammell. "I want the girls to be pushed past what they think might be their limit. When they get to work with someone like Travis Wall... how exciting is that!?"

It's also about motivation in the studio. Finglass notes, "With the choreographers, especially in the spring, when we just want to keep them stimulated as dancers... They've been doing field and pom routines for our games, but a lot of them have come from studio training and they've been away from that, so, we bring that back to them through these great choreographers. Or, a lot of them have come from a high school or college pom team and may not have had a beautiful, contemporary lyrical class... It's fun to enhance their education, to develop and grow their styles."

To further emphasize focus on the individual styles of each dancer, the organization launched #DCCInMotion this season. The video series, which highlights the talent and dedication to training that is beyond the cheers on the sideline, has been a welcome addition to the vault of DCC program enhancements this year.

With the bar raised higher and higher each year and the DCC legacy forever in lights, Finglass reflects on her career to this point and what each dream and season means to the team with warmth and excitement. "I've been fortunate to have a long career where I can wait some of these goals out or let them simmer, or really truly come to fruition. For the girls, it's always a new step in life - a new world after high school, college and then you're in boot camp survival mode growing and developing, and that just brings people together."

For Maddie, any time she's in that world wearing her super suit, she's exactly where she's meant to be. "There are only 10 games. We put hours and hours and hours into those 10 days, but there's so much more - volunteer work, meeting the community, teaching classes, camps, all of those things make the job what it is. I can be the exact same person in normal clothes, and it's just not the same as when you put on that uniform and tie the knot. It's a gift for sure."



"I went to my first prep class and fell in love with it and the women I met. We're all here because we love to dance."

LILY
ROOKIE



Pursuit of Excellence: Auditions to Game Day

"If you like performing, why not perform for 100,000 people!?" emphasizes Caroline, a second-year cheerleader from Columbia Performing Arts Centre (CPAC) in Columbia, Mo., and University of Missouri Golden Girls. "You learn every day from these girls who come in with their own style and training, and then you come together as a team out of pure passion for performing - that's the magic!"

Throughout the audition process and grueling three-month training camp, on Game Day and during each appearance, the women develop life skills to accomplish incredible goals. As a team, they achieve a level of excellence, unity and precision while balancing a whirlwind schedule.

"You learn to put other people's happiness above your own. Being so happy for your teammates when they achieve something or earn an opportunity... it's family."

AMY
FIFTH YEAR & PRO
BOWL CHEERLEADER

Their drive, ability to dance and embrace musicality, and entertain, remains at the heart of everything they do and each cheerleader has primed her own journey to success and a spot on the team. Some journeys are similar in nature and progression, others are vastly different in terms of their training and testing the waters of the dance and performance world.

It's these differences both in path and pursuit that produce a team with an incredible map of diversity. "These dancers come here knowing a lot already. A lot of them are coming from great college dance teams, are studio-trained, competitive dancers. They're used to this world and working hard," says Trammell.

In recent years, a highly organized devotion to recruiting the

best of the best across the country, and the heightened popularity of the reality show, boosted by huge social media presence has resulted in the most extreme level of talent ever auditioning for the traditional 36 spots on the team. Finglass is quick to praise associate choreographer Shelly Roper-McCaslin for much of the success when it comes to recruiting. "She's formed her own purpose and started reaching out to all of these college dance teams and competitive studios that already cultivate great performers."

For Daphne, now in her second season, it was the personal connection she felt which brought her to Dallas to audition. "I danced at UCLA and being in LA and from California, I never really considered anything outside of there. My instructor at UCLA encouraged me to go out for DCC. Having that push from someone I truly valued in my life really motivated me. I took a prep class and met Heather (a current fourth-year) there. She went out of her way to connect me. I think with the encouragement coming from home, a personal connection here and Shelly as a recruiter helping with the process, I had the confidence to try."

Amy, Group 1 leader and a fifth-year veteran out of Oklahoma City University who is also this year's DCC representative to the NFL Pro Bowl, says audition prep classes were key to her feeling comfortable to audition and mastering the legendary DCC style - it's own unique blend of hip hop, jazz, contemporary, and pom with a little sass, a lot of personality, all with its own flare. "The thing that gets girls most is picking up choreography, so going to these classes every week - you learn a new dance every single week - you have to be able to learn and retain choreography quickly. Our TV show is so accurate - it helped me so much knowing what to expect."

Television cameras aside, the women have to show something extraordinary throughout auditions and training camp before earning their boots. "Always prepare, look your best, know football terminology," Amy emphasizes. "You have to be so well-rehearsed and immersed in the Cowboys and be able to be eloquent and intelligent in every moment. Come prepared, because everyone else will."

Hey Look Ma, I Made It!: The Sisterhood

"In a highly competitive room filled with women you might think you'd be able to cut the tension in the room with a knife," says Finglass. "But once they make the team, instantly they go from feeling in a competitive place to that feeling of family. It's such pressure and once they make the team, I think that pressure turns to pride."

Without question, the women believe the audition process itself creates their unique sisterhood. And the transition from training camp to team-member especially, creates a lifelong bond.

It's a sentiment echoed by Trammell, whose daughter Cassie was a member of the squad from 2008-12. "They support each other through everything. They grow up to be polished women - it's so exciting to see. They have a presence about them - they're engaging, they're intelligent, they're fun. They come here so goal-driven and they leave here even more so that way. They're goal-driven to create a bigger life."

School, jobs, living away from home, looking polished at all times, staying healthy and fit and being able to adapt to a schedule six or seven days a week that might include rehearsals each night for different performance with entirely different choreography - appearances, USO Tours, Show Group performances, sidelines, halftime and hopefully a little time for sleep - it's all a superb balancing act.

Lily, a rookie in her first season who danced for the University of Kentucky and made the squad after just missing the cut the year prior, says the balancing act, together with a new set of pressures is difficult, but so worth it. "I'm still adjusting!"

she says.

And for fourth-year veterans Heather (University of Arizona Pomline) and Tess (LSU Golden Girls), the opportunity to perform and live life with their teammates is what creates community within the team. "Tess and I have been through this for four years and some days she's my sister and some days she's my mom (laughs)," Heather says. "So many girls are from out of state - we fill so many voids for each other."

"I don't think anyone has an easy time in training camp, no matter how prepared you are," Tess says. "Once we get through that process and struggle together, it really does bring you closer together. That's what we build upon. To get through those three months, you find each other."

It's a remarkable thing, the process, the sisterhood, and DCC legacy. Often imitated, never equaled yes, but it's truly so much more. It's the last moment in the tunnel at AT&T stadium for a fifth-year veteran, a rookie's first performance of *Thunderstruck* in front of 100,000 fans, a quiet moment with a soldier far from home, and a little girl just starting on her own journey holding a special sign for her favorite cheerleader.

"Knowing how many opportunities or challenges we experience, we have to be very brave, Tess says. "I remember dancing those first couple improv eight counts in front of Kelli and Judy, it still gives me chills. Still today, media interviews or new experiences, you just have to be brave and embrace them. It's changed me as a woman knowing I can stand on my own two feet. All of us, we can walk out into the world, we can represent this company, and accomplish anything."

Pictured Here:
ALANNA
SECOND YEAR



"Putting on boots for the first time, doing yard lines for the first time, everything is on the line and you're dancing for your lives. Once that extra nerve-wracking rehearsal ends and you know you've put everything into it you can, that's always a great feeling."

RACHEL W.
SECOND YEAR

Spotlight!

More Than I Ever Imagined

For Ashlee, who grew up in Shreveport, La., praise dancing at church, loving hip hop and performing, and eventually landing at Louisiana Tech, the journey to DCC found her in the middle of an experience she never dreamed. Now in her second season, Ashlee shared her story in depth.

Tell us about your journey to audition for the DCCs...

I had been dancing for a long time, but once I was in high school and part of a competitive team, we did a competition at AT&T stadium. It was the first time I saw a DCC. They were doing an appearance and it put a face to the organization for me. I'd always known the Dallas Cowboys, but to know the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders was a little different. My first year in college, I focused on my academics and didn't dance at all. My second year, I made the team at Louisiana Tech (Regal Blues) and I met Shelly. That's where my complete interest and dedication to making this team started. I think one of the reasons I was able to make DCC was because of my love for performance. Succeeding is a matter of confidence and power and I think my background really mapped that out and solidified that for me.

What were those first few moments in training camp like for you?

That I even took the step to try out... this is the top of the top. This is it. I thought I needed to be a part of another professional dance team before I tried out, I needed a stepping stone - I considered performing with a professional basketball team, or Rhythm and Blue which would be great because I could be part of the organization. But, I went with trying out

for DCC. Stepping into that element and making it to finals was crazy. Training camp is completely different. You hear along the way it's a battle, a mental process you think you've prepared yourself for - it's brutal - but you appreciate the organization even more because you know they really want great ambassadors, and they train you up for that.

Describe your journey from your first to your second year on the team...

I've grown so much between my first and second year. Honestly, everything is so surprising to me. It's hard to hide the emotion. As a rookie, you appreciate being a rookie. This year, it's so rewarding to be on Show Group, to be able to try for something to just keep growing. Even before I made this team, I wondered what my story was or what

it would be. I'm from Shreveport, a small commercial city. People have dreams but they don't really go anywhere with them. But here I am. It's awesome to be a role model and an example. This is my calling.

What advice would you offer someone on the verge of going for their DCC dream?

If you ever take a step in this direction, you're doing amazing! Girls tell me they don't have a lot of studio dance experience or aren't technically sound. I tell them I didn't come from a studio background. You don't have to have the same history as everyone else, but what you *want* to have is the same dedication and determination. I've learned to offer myself and others grace. And I encourage everyone to give yourself grace and encourage yourself. Take a step back and realize how talented you are. It's... more than I ever imagined.

Pictured Here:
ASHLEE
SECOND YEAR



#DCCinMotion!

"DCC In Motion came about because most fans only saw DCC with poms. We really wanted to show off a fuller range of styles and advanced technical abilities from their training."

JUDY TRAMMELL
HEAD CHOREOGRAPHER

Check it out at dallascowboys.com/video/dcc-in-motion

