

An experience of a lifetime for Annika Dale



By Sara Gottardi

In total having spent approximately 117 hours alone in just rehearsals all the way up until the live performance with the Cirque du Soleil (CDS) on Friday, July 10 at the Rogers Centre in Toronto for the Pan Am Games 2015, Annika Dale spent countless days and nights preparing for the great opportunity unfolding before her. An unassuming and bright young girl, then just 13 (now 14) would go on to spend long hours for weeks on end working towards being a part of nationwide CDS group for the Pan Am Games opening ceremony, sometimes spending eight hours on just one move in rehearsals. Perfecting and tweaking sequences for the show vastly approaching on the horizon as in February, when Dale was flashed with this great opportunity and fine intuition, she tried out for the experience of a lifetime opening her mind and options. Having taken that first chance, Dale reaped rewards flying through each escalating level of auditioning segments impressively as people got cut all the way until the judges decision on just 133 people to perform out of the 800some who'd tried out initially.

?They were looking for children that could feel the music. They basically taught us a dance and we had to perform it in a group. They were looking for children that could learn a dance quickly and be able to portray emotion... And I did it!?! giving a wrap-up on the story about going through an eight hour gruelling auditioning process, Dale said about making it into the CDS group that ?after being a part of the show I could definitely see myself doing the high risk stunts that CDS is famous for. I actually got to go to circus school during my grade 8 trip to Quebec this year which I loved... That would be so cool to do,? Dale elated alluding to future gymnastics and possibly figure skating endeavours.

A distant tryout but an unquestionably cool dream, now has become a part of Dale's reality and life's history as she's manifested taking that leap of faith in herself. A powerful story of success at a tender age for her children in later years to come will appreciate and be fascinated in hearing passed around the family dinner table.

Travelling down to Toronto over a period of four months consistently, Dale became skilled and knowledgeable of different ways in

making her way around the big city as the subway was the only way around she'd said. Tracey Dale, Annika's mother, admitted upon arriving to the CBC building for auditions the first few times, were a bit daunting as a sea of faces filling the hall met their gaze in hopes of being cast for CDS.

At last, being one of few selected to perform for an audience holding over 43,000 people, with another 7,000 attending athletes, with yet another (roundabout 500,000,000) people watching the Pan Am Games broadcast worldwide. Dale's pressure was on full throttle, but her head strongly grounded and determined, she'd gave a grave performance of a physical and mental demanding stamina and power ride, like that of an athlete. Dale said of the performance, 'I was more excited than nervous,' also rejoicing saying, 'I was a part of such an amazing production that was seen by millions around the world but yet it was right here in Canada. It was more than just the opening ceremonies, it was the buzz we felt being in the middle of everything. I watched the City of Toronto build up for this big event?.'

Sporadic and long nights running until nine sometimes and early morning starting at eight, they'd wanted everything to be as perfect as possible Dale said about production. The choreographers were great she said saying, 'They reminded us all the time that we were doing a great job - we were all part of a team - so they worked with us as though we were a team and never made us feel like someone was 'better'?'.

Tracey Dale went on to speak on daughter Annika's behalf saying, 'Annika has always been extremely passionate about gymnastics and figure skating,' that she has always been active and is always doing flips in the air or something along those lines. Having a great supportive system at home, Annika Dale gives a great thanks to her mother, Tracey Dale, father, Fletcher Dale and her sister Seanna Dale in having given up on many things in order for her to go through with this experience. Receiving an overwhelming amount of support from the community all the way from South Africa, the Philippines, France, Alberta and all over respecting areas of Ontario, Dale said the community [all around the world] really 'stepped up in supporting my family - we called it: The Bancroft and Beyond?' community, she said closing off with an overwhelming thanks and positive outlook for the future.