

## Ballroom Dance Competitions

When you think of athletic competitions, chances are you probably don't think of ballroom dancing. Most people tend to think of football games, tennis matches, or track and field meets. While all of these certainly qualify for an athletic competition, you probably already know exactly what to anticipate as a spectator. However, ballroom dance competitions shed a different light on athleticism and are by far entertaining to watch.

Until recently, ballroom dance was something associated with older generations or the wealthy. Around the late 1980's, ballroom dancing began to take light once again but faded around 1995. It remained on the back burner of America's athletic competitions until 1999, when it suddenly gained popularity and has remained stable ever since. With the media taking an interest in ballroom dancing over the past few years, more and more people are learning and competing in ballroom dancing.

Some of the most popular ballroom dance competitions are hosted by Access Dance with competitions held nationwide. Competitions are held all year long with prizes ranging in money to vacation packages. The competition is divided into three main categories: youth, amateur, and professional. This allows everyone of all ages and ability levels to compete in ballroom dancing.

The Maryland Institute of Technology (MIT) also hosts an annual ballroom dance competition. The competition is open to members of the MIT ballroom dance team and anyone else who would like to compete. The competition is divided up according to the style of dance you want to enter - for example, the mambo, jive, paso doble, etc. Each dance is classified into two categories, beginning and intermediate, with everyone invited to compete at the championship level. The cost for entering this competition ranges between \$10 and \$40 depending on your skill level and which category you are entering.

Perhaps the most notorious ballroom dance competition is "Dancing with the Stars", aired twice annually on ABC. This highly addictive dance competition features celebrities from various backgrounds, from the entertainment industry to athletes. The most recent champion of ballroom dancing, Apollo Anton Ono, is a gold-medal Olympic speed skater who had no prior knowledge of ballroom dancing prior to the competition. The prior season of "Dancing with the Stars" also produced a winner from the athlete genre, Emmitt Smith, a former NFL player for the Dallas Cowboys. This competition pairs up celebrities with no ballroom dance knowledge with professional partners who teach ballroom dance. It begins with ten couples and each week, viewers eliminate a couple by voting for their favorite. It was after the first season of "Dancing with the Stars" that people

took an interest in ballroom dancing and the craze soon spread all over the world. Now, over twenty countries host their own version of this televised ballroom dance competition.

If you are interested in competing in ballroom dancing, a simple search of the internet will provide you with information regarding a competition near you. Even if you are just starting out, there are competitions for every skill level and ability.