

I learnt to dance like the stars

How do celebs transform themselves into *Dancing On Ice* skating champions? Our writer Liz Frost found out...

DAY 1

It's 15 years since I last set foot on an ice rink. But how hard can it be, I think, as I sign up for a three-day course at Queens Ice And Bowl in London, where some of the celebs taking part in this year's *Dancing On Ice* are training.

My trainer Vince Kyle tells me he's worked with Torvill and Dean. He teaches skating by day and fits bathrooms by night. He seems too down-to-earth for someone who can move better on ice than I can on dry land.

As I make my way to the edge of the rink my feet feel heavy and very unstable. Stepping on to the ice, I feel my feet slip against

its glassy surface and grab the edge. Even standing up isn't easy.

Jessica Taylor from Liberty X glides past me backwards on one leg. Vince says she's been training since September. 'They really work hard to get as good as they are on the show,' he says.

I attempt a wobbly lap of the ice rink, but when Vince does a comedy impression of me, I realise we've got a long way to go. According to him, my feet are 'clunky' and I need to take longer, gliding steps.

The first thing he teaches me is how to stop by gradually sliding my feet outwards, ploughing the ice. I bash into the barrier a few times. There'll be bruises tomorrow.

After an hour and a half, I'm knackered. But there's no let-up. Vince shows me how to do Lemons – making lemon shapes on the ice by sliding your feet in and out.

Just as I'm marvelling that I haven't fallen yet, former *The X Factor* contestant Ray Quinn steps on to the ice. The distraction causes my first tumble. Helping me up, Vince says he thinks he'll get to the final.

Before the end of the session, I've fallen over four times and managed to kick myself in the shin with the sharp part of my skate, but gliding fast on the ice gives you such a rush, it feels a bit like flying.



Now we're getting somewhere!

DAY 2

All my muscles ache from yesterday – even ones I didn't think I'd used, like my stomach and upper arms. Vince runs through the steps we learnt, then teaches me a few more. He warns me not to be too confident or I'll fall over. Sure enough, as I'm learning a move called 'The Teapot', which involves crouching down and extending one leg out in front, I end up on my bottom.

Vince agrees to turn what I've learnt into a mini-routine. It takes me about 15 goes to remember the steps and there are only about four of them! Jessica is practising with her trainer. 'That's the easy routine,' Vince confides. 'The one you've just done is the hard one.' I feel immensely smug.

'Ray Quinn caused my first tumble'



Vince isn't too impressed with my technique

Ice on ice

DAY 3

Vince says my crossovers are looking really good, but I've developed a habit of bobbing up and down as I skate. 'Keep the top part of your body still and just move your legs,' he tells me. Believe me, it's a lot harder than it looks.

At the end of today's session I'll change into a professional skating outfit and perform the routine with Vince, and at the end he'll do a spiral lift.

First we

have to practise off the ice. Vince tells me to hold the barrier with both hands and lift a leg behind me. Once he lifts me, I have to bend the leg on the ground to make an attractive line. I stumble about, trying to get my balance, and think, 'There's no way I'll manage that on the ice!'

I marvel at how tiny my outfit is but Vince says it'll stretch. My legs feel really exposed, not to mention my bottom, but it does make me feel like a pro.

We do the routine and it's time for the lift! I extend my leg out back, my skate wobbles briefly and then I feel Vince pick me up. It feels surprisingly safe. I remember to put my other leg in position and then we're spinning around at high speed, and I'm grinning like an idiot. It's like being on a roller coaster! Before I have the chance to get scared, it's over and Vince is lowering me back on to the ice.

I'm dizzy but totally elated! Now I know why all the celebs want to continue skating after the show. I may be a bit battered and bruised, but it's completely addictive and great exercise.



It's like being on a roller coaster



I'm elated and can't wait to do it all again

REAL LIFE CHALLENGE

ICE GOSSIP

As the new series starts, we reveal what's been going on behind the scenes...

● The celebs have been training since September. But usually they're not paired up with their champion partner until two months into training.

● A massive 325 canisters of fake tan are used per series and the girls get through a staggering 220 sets of fake eyelashes.

● There's no danger of John Sergeant appearing on the ice. Potential participants usually have skating auditions and the tapes are sent to Torvill and Dean for their decision.

● The studio rink is at Elstree Studios, in Hertfordshire.

There's around 40,000 litres of water and it takes 48 hours to freeze.

● Don't blame the celebs if they look tired. Some are picked up at 6.30am on the morning of the show and then don't appear on air for another 12 hours!

● On the 2008 *Dancing On Ice* tour, Chris Fountain and Bonnie Langford had a pool going – £5 if they fell, £2 if they tripped and they counted it up at the end.

Torvill and Dean help vet the contestants



Chris Fountain was last year's runner-up