

Rising to the Challenge

My life has revolved around dance ever since my parents enrolled me for ballet classes at three years old. I loved practicing my dances, going to class, and trying different styles of dance so it was a huge moment in my life when I was asked to join the dance team in second grade. Though I loved to dance, I never took more than one class per year so when I joined the team and was obligated to attend five new classes every week, I was concerned about whether I was going to be able to remember the dances for competition. During the year, I attended all my classes and practiced at home in preparation for our competition season which started in March. On March 24, 2019, I had my first ever dance competition in which I learned the importance of rising to your challenges and not letting your fears overrule your decisions.

In dance competitions, the sessions are split by age group and form of dance (group, solos, duets, etc.). For the petite age group of kids ages seven to nine (in which I was in), the dances would start early in the morning and end by early afternoon. This meant that I had to wake up at around six o'clock in the morning to get ready for the dance competition. When I woke up to get ready, all I could think about was that I didn't want to perform my dances in my tired state. Reluctantly, I got ready and soon after arrived at the venue in which my team was dancing. I had expected the competition to be a ballroom with a small changing room in the back for all the dances but when I walked in, there was a huge lobby that was filled with parents, friends and dancers. It was a thrilling experience seeing so many people with the same passion all packed in one room and it made me excited to compete. When I walked into the huge dressing room designated for the petite dancers, I quickly located my team and set my duffel bag in a spot near them. We rehearsed our dances in whatever empty space we could find and went to the lobby once again to take some photos. It wasn't until we went backstage that the nerves really started to hit.

There was a rule at the competition that the dancers weren't allowed to go backstage until there were five dances before their routine. I only peeked of the stage from the audience while I was walking in for the first time so I was completely thrown off when I was finally allowed backstage and saw all the hustle and bustle. It was at that moment that I started to get nervous. I rehearsed the dance in my head and started to forget some parts and get really overwhelmed by the loud music and bright stage lights. I was completely blinded by my stress that I didn't realize that our dance was up next. Though every part of my body ached to stay backstage and not face the judges and the audience, I reminded myself of how much hard work I had put in during the dance season. When the music started playing and I started dancing, all my stress and nervousness went away and I knew I was where I belonged.

That day is my most memorable memory and is used as a reminder of my dedication to my art and how I shouldn't let my nerves hold me back from success. I continue to dance and perform onstage but I have learned to control my nerves during competition days so I am able to dance to my potential. Now when I am backstage, I don't fold from the nerves. Instead, I feel excited to go onstage and show everyone my passion for dance