

He's the gold medalist speed skater who twirled his way to the top. **Apolo Anton Ohno** tells *OK!* how it feels to be a dancing king

It was Apolo Anton Ohno's ultimate birthday gift — the *Dancing With the Stars* disco-ball trophy. On the night of May 22, his 25th birthday, the speed skater and his partner, Julianne Hough, 18, danced their way to victory with a hip-hop-inspired freestyle number, which scored them a perfect 30.

Now, with the audience applause ringing in his ears, Apolo is swapping the dance floor for the short track, leaving the glitz of L.A. behind to move to the American Olympic training camp in Salt Lake City. Julianne happens, coincidentally, to be from there. "My whole family's there," she says, "so he's definitely going to have some friends and some fans there."

What's next for the champ? The quest for more gold medals in short-track speed skating at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. "I started my career in Seattle, then started going back and forth to Vancouver," Apolo says. "My debut Olympics was Salt Lake City, my first success. Now I'm moving back there to train and I'm finishing my career in Vancouver. It's coming full circle."

Congratulations, Apolo! How does it feel to be a dance champion?

It's perfect. It feels remarkably awesome. I'm a competitor. I entered this competition because I wanted to win. I did not know it was going to be this hard or take this much time. It's been quite an experience.

What have you learned about yourself from doing the show?

I'm still just climbing out of my shell. I've spent so much of my life being focused and poker-faced, and it's just like nothing I've ever done so it's been a lot of fun. The cool thing is, the buzz surrounding the show has been so intense and

almost overwhelming that it's really [made] a whole bunch of new cool and exciting avenues available.

Now that you're the DWTS champ, what are you planning next?

Obviously, because of the attention the show gets and the people that watch the show, a lot of opportunities have come my way. I've got to make sure it's the right fit and it's true to me, true to my personality and authentic. I've always said life is too short not to try and explore and experience things. We'll see what's available.

How could you incorporate dancing into your skating?

I would throw something from every single dance into skating, depending on what the distance is. You know, maybe it's the 1,500 [meter] and I'll bring out a ballroom hold and then go back into position. For the 500, they'll announce my name and I'll bust out into the cha-cha — boom, boom! Can you imagine? "Representing the United States, Apolo Anton" — boom, boom [he does a dance step] — "OHNO!"

What goes through your head when you're skating?

What goes through my head? I'm in the zone. They are the most beautiful times of my life. Those are, like, so pure. I'm not worrying about anything else. I put it in automatic and I'm skating.

What about dancing?

There's no automatic. It's more like a manual that's missing a second and fourth gear!

OK!

— Carole Glines



Ballroom blitz

Apolo and Julianne won the mirror-ball prize after performing the paso doble. "I'm so excited to see Apolo win," says *Dancing With the Stars* judge Carrie Ann Inaba of the bandanna-wearing winner. "He took it so seriously. He truly mastered the dances. He was the best technical dancer."

