

Wheelchair Dancesport A Dancers Diary



Scott Kenney, a bilateral below knee amputee and award winning wheelchair dancer, discovers that dancing brings joy and fun to people of all abilities.

I've always loved to dance. I've always loved to perform. This year I discovered a stage on which I can do both ... Wheelchair Dancesport.

In January a friend of mine read about a group of wheelchair dancers that meet at Morayfield every Saturday. She thought that I would enjoy giving it a go. That day I rang the phone number listed in the article and enrolled in the very next class.

Saturday 28th January is a day I'll never forget. I arrived at the class early, which is typical of me when nervous. I didn't know what wheelchair dancing involved nor how many people participated. The class was held at Morayfield Park Leisure Centre, about a 45 minute drive north of my home in Brisbane. It was well set up for wheelchair access, with ample level parking, no stairs at all to speak of and fully accessible toilets. Mitchell works at the Leisure Centre and he explained to me what the class involved. I sat patiently in the foyer area and soon enough wheelchair dancers started arriving.

I'd been out social dancing before, in nightclubs etc. But rarely did I see anyone else in wheelchairs. Perhaps the venues weren't suitable, perhaps the music was too loud, perhaps the nights were too late ... I really wasn't sure. So to see one, then two, then four, then ten wheelchair dancers come through the door blew my mind. I couldn't wait to see how they danced.

Before the music started I got to meet the coach, Lynette. I knew a bit about her already from the article my friend read only a week before – an inspirational person who had been teaching wheelchair dance all over Australia for the past 15 years. She didn't talk about this however, instead politely introducing herself and warmly welcoming me into the group with open arms. In fact the whole group welcomed me and invited me to watch their first dance.

The music started. Then the dancing. Oh my God this was beautiful. It was a Waltz. I remember having goosebumps & shedding a few private tears of joy, to think I'd finally discovered what felt like home ... people of all differing abilities sharing a love for music and movement, all on the dance floor at the same time.

It wasn't long before I was invited to join in. Step by step I learnt my first ever

ballroom dance. So much smiling, so much laughter, so much fun. I got to meet everybody that day, a group whom I now consider wonderful friends. And since I started, more people have joined, more smiling, more laughter and more fun.

And for those who are interested, there are competitions to enter. To dance in front of an audience, to dance in front of judges, to dance with people from all over the world. You see, wheelchair dancing is a sport practised in more than 20 countries worldwide. In fact Holland, the birthplace of the sport, just celebrated their 25th anniversary of dancing. And it was at this very celebration that Australia took their first steps onto the world stage of competition Wheelchair Dancesport.

Over Easter 2006, a team of ten Australians flew to Holland and danced. I was a member of that team and it was a trip of a lifetime. 19 countries were represented and two couples from Australia competed. Both couples made finals in the debutante category, which represents a top six ranking in the world. A huge achievement for a country relatively new to the sport, and a huge accolade for our national coach, Lynette. Many joyful tears were shed and many new friends were made.



So that's my diary so far from only three months of dancing. So many new friends, so many fun memories and I've seen parts of the world I never thought I would. The true beauty of the sport is that anyone can participate, no matter what their level of ability. You can learn ballroom, you can learn latin, you can have the time of your life. I dance at Morayfield, but there are new dancing groups starting up in different regions. At the very least you'll make new friends and dance to beautiful music. And who knows, you may get the chance to represent your country one day in front of loving family and friends.

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