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< < Back

'Dancing' from TV to the tour

Two-time winner Cheryl Burke talks about her star partners and taking her dance steps on the road

IF YOU G

What: Slim-F
Dancing With the Stars
Where: Gaylord Entertainment Center, 501
When: 7:30 p.m.
Tickets: \$38-\$58.50, through 255-9600 or www.ticketmaster.com
Contact: For more information, call 255-9600 or visit www.gaylordentertainment.com

BY MOLLY REED
Staff Writer

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Professional dancer and two-time *Dancing With the Stars* champion Cheryl Burke brings her magical moves to Gaylord Entertainment Center Sunday.

Actor Mario Lopez and professional dancing partner Karina Smirnoff were sad to see it go, but after 10 weeks of sambas, waltzes, rumbas and foxtrots, and much deliberation, America had decided. Only one couple was worthy of the coveted disco ball trophy, and that pair was football great Emmitt Smith and professional dancer Cheryl Burke, the winning competitors of season three of the hit reality TV show *Dancing With the Stars*.

The show pairs celebrities with professional dancers, who then compete weekly through a number of ballroom dances. Couples are then scored by judges and voted on by viewers, with the couple with the lowest combined score eliminated each week. During the show's finale, the favorite pair of dancers wins.

Burke, a 22-year-old from Los Angeles who quickly became a show favorite after being spotted by scouts for the series, claimed the prize two seasons in a row. Before securing a win with Smith, she danced her way to victory during season two with former 98 Degrees band member Drew Lachey. The two are currently reunited for Slim-Fast Presents *Dancing With the Stars* — The Tour, which stops at Gaylord Entertainment Center Sunday.

"It wasn't difficult, but it was a little different at first because I was so used to Emmitt," the dancer said about rejoining Lachey. "Emmitt is three times the size of Drew, so that was a little different for me, but we clicked right away when we started dancing and practicing the first few weeks before the tour started."

Between the two celebrities, though, Burke says one is not a better dancer than the other. "You can't really compare the two because Emmitt and Drew come from two totally different backgrounds," she said. "With Drew, he came from a boy band, so musicality and everything he understood, but at the same time he wasn't so used to the differences of ballroom dancing, so it was hard for him to take that up."

"With Emmitt, he comes from football," she continued. "So he had no idea of posture or elegance. It took me a little longer to discipline his body and let him get used to the different steps and the

different choreography that ballroom dancing has, but one thing Emmitt has is a lot of natural rhythm and he was able to incorporate some of his own style into the choreography I made for him."

Despite initial difficulties, Burke said training the stars was a pleasure for her.

"They both really wanted to do this," she said. "They wanted to win the competition and they said they would do whatever it takes to win. They were on the same page I was, so whatever it took, whatever I said would help them with the competition they would respect and they would work hard, too."

Burke and Lachey might

not have to work *quite* as hard on the tour as they did for the TV show, because performances for the tour are not competitive. "We're all together, no one gets eliminated and we do the same show every night," said Burke. "With the television show, every week is a new dance."

Joining the couple for tour performances, which feature nightclub-style table seating and a re-creation of the TV show's actual stage, are singer Joey McIntyre partnering with dancer Kym Johnson, actress Lisa Rinna with dancer Louis Van Amstel, actor Joey Lawrence with dancer Edyta Sliwinska, singer Willa Ford with dancer Maksim Chmerkovskiy, and actor Harry Hamlin with Smirnoff. Country star Sara Evans, who participated in the TV show but left midway through season three to proceed with her divorce from husband Craig Schelske, will make a special appearance during Sunday's event. Evans and dancer Tony Dovolani, her partner from the show, will join together for the Nashville stop only to perform a surprise dance.

Burke said she's looking forward to seeing the pair. "Hopefully we'll get together after the show at some point," she said. "I'm very excited to see both Sara and Tony."

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