

A Mile in My Shoes: Jason Bodle with Andrew Beattie

Jason: Good morning. Listener. Welcome to RTRFM 92.1. This is A Mile in My Shoes. I'm your host, Jason Bodle, and today I will be interviewing an international skating champion, Andrew Beattie. Welcome Andrew to the podcast. How are you?

Andrew: I'm very well. Thank you.

Jason: So you're an artistic roller skater. Would you like to tell us a little bit more about what that entails?

Andrew: Yeah, sure. It's a very graceful sport, very similar to our ice skating counterpart, with a high establishment, with the artistic and choreographical side of movements as well as fluidity along the floor.

Jason: So how did you get into artistic roller skating?

Andrew: I started skating when I was nine years old. Years ago, I attended a friend's birthday party, and when I was there, I saw advertisements for learn to skate classes, and at the time, I was very keen to try those out.

Jason: So what discipline of roller skating do you do?

Andrew: I compete in senior men's solo dance.

Jason: So I have a list of achievements of yours in front of me that I would like to go through. So first in the Oceania Championships in New Zealand, you won first place. Not only did you win first place, but you won first place with a broken arm. How did you break your arm? Was that a training injury?

Andrew: Yeah, four weeks prior to flying to New Zealand, I had a training injury, and it was quite an unusual break, and I was told it would only take four weeks to heal. So I was still very keen to make this competition in New Zealand with my arm in a sling that I was able to take on and off, because I still had enough range in my arm to keep it moving.

Jason: And that was in 2016. Was that your first professional championship?

Andrew: Yes.

Jason: So imagine the dedication you've gotta put into breaking your arm in training and then deciding no, my first time round, I'm still going to charge it. I'm still going to do it with a broken arm. I think that's pretty commendable. I've got to say. Next year in 2017, the Oceania championships, again, this time in Brisbane, you won first place for cadet solo dance. 2018 Roller Cup in

Portugal. You won first place in youth men's solo free dance. 2019 Oceania championships in Melbourne, first place with a torn ankle ligament. 2019 Roller Games Barcelona, eighth place in junior men's solo dance. You were awarded Junior skater of the year within Australia in 2019 and unfortunately, over the course of 2020 you were unable to compete due to COVID 19. In 2021 Australia cup ranking system ranked you first place in senior men's solo dance. In 2022 for the World Cup final in Germany, you placed fifth in senior men's solo dance. In 2022 at the World Skate Games in Argentina, you placed 11th place in senior men's solo dance. 2023, the national championships, which was held at Bunbury, you scored first place and highest score out of the entire competition, plus you were awarded senior skater of the year within Australia. So what an incredible achievement. How were you feeling after making those two achievements in the same day in Bunbury, no less?

Andrew: To have the championships in Bunbury to begin with, was something I was really appreciative for, because we've always had to travel so far, usually to Perth, just for a local competition, but to have that competition in Bunbury, it just provided me with a unique appreciation for the people involved with the sport, and I did feel very proud of myself with my achievements there, and I was very grateful for all of the support I had along the way.

Jason: In 2023 at the Oceania Championships Pan Pacific Cup in Brisbane, you placed first place in senior men's solo dance. So this next achievement is really something special. You've authored two compulsory dances. Would you like to elaborate a little bit more on that?

Andrew: Yes, so I did author two compulsory dances that have been selected to be a part of the 2024 World Skate regulations and requirements. So these dances that are created are being used around the world, and they have been published by World Skate themselves. And I was also fortunate enough to do a presentation of these dances to international coaches in Venice at a seminar last year.

Jason: And this isn't an everyday opportunity for athletes in your field, is it?

Andrew: No, to my knowledge there have only been two skaters that have had their work published with the World Skate Association.

Jason: Only two, and you are one of them. I bet that fills you with pride.

Andrew: Yeah. Very much so.

Jason: So for these dances of yours that have been published, what does this mean for you going forward?

Andrew: For me, it will always provide me with a connection to the sport in one way or another, to have my name published in the World Skate dance and solo dance book. It is an incredible opportunity to have that.

Jason: And I think it really needs to be recognised, what an amazing achievement. In talking to you, before the podcast, I was explaining to you how I found RTR through the Breaking Sound Barriers course, and bringing up my place on the autistic spectrum, and you mentioned that you also happen to be on the spectrum. So at what age were you diagnosed with Asperger's, in your case?

Andrew: I was diagnosed when I was three years old.

Jason: I couldn't help but ask, do you feel this has any impact on your skating career?

Andrew: Being on the autism spectrum has provided me with an array of different strengths and challenges. One of the strengths I've noticed over the years is that it's given me a unique appreciation for detail and structure within the sport, which has helped facilitate those compulsory dances and their creations. And then one of the challenges I've really noticed is a sensory overload, particularly managing the external factors that are involved with the sport.

Jason: How many days a week do you train?

Andrew: I do train five days a week, and it does consist of intense cardiovascular endurance. However, I do also work part time.

Jason: So with all the rigorous training and your work, how do you avoid ASD burnout?

Andrew: For me, time is the best recovery for ASD burnout. It helps to alleviate sensory overload, and I find that listening to calm music or classical music is also very helpful and productive.

Jason: Andrew, how do your parents support you with your training?

Andrew: My parents are both very hard workers in the retail industry, and they also provide me with emotional support and encouragement through competitive seasons. When I was younger, especially, they would drive me to training all the time from school, so there was a financial coverage as well with private lessons and the competition costs and equipment costs.

Jason: Also here today is Liz, Andrew's mum. Liz, how are you?

Liz: I'm good. Thank you, Jason.

Jason: And Liz, in your words, what way do you support Andrew in roller skating?

Liz: Certainly we still support financially, because it's not funded by any government, and I also travel with Andrew overseas and nationally.

Jason: So what types of things do you need to think about to support Andrew when competing in overseas locations?

Liz: So when we plan to travel, we always arrive at least two days prior to competition, so we've got time for transitioning to the environment we're in, and also enough time for him to prepare for his events, mentally and physically.

Jason: How much does the sport cost annually?

Liz: So it is a very expensive sport. We average between \$20,000 and \$30,000 a year. And the cost of this is due to private lessons, costumes, car hires, accommodation, flights, food and equipment.

Andrew: One year where we had three sets of new skates.

Jason: How much would that have costed, roughly.

Liz: Wheels and skates, about \$4,500 and they all come from Italy, so they're custom made to fit. They can't be the next size up for when you grow into because that will cause injuries to ankles.

Jason: How often do you have to replace them?

Andrew: Two or three years.

Jason: And so with that, you have to cover all of the cost yourself. So Andrew, what types of challenges are there during competitions?

Andrew: Well, every time I compete at a different venue. The nature of the skating surface is always different. Usually, I train on concrete. So I compete on wood, sometimes. Parquetry, marble, laminate. Sometimes that can be challenging when the floor surface is difficult to skate on, and also excessive heat is another factor that can be quite challenging because we are essentially in big sheds, recreation centers or velodromes, and sometimes it's difficult to get air ventilation in those buildings. I have been to a training venue in Argentina that was just a basketball court outside that was open to the elements, with just a roof and a few pillars, and it was raining at the time, so we had to dodge puddles and sticks and we had birds flying above us, and it was quite challenging to skate there.

Jason: So which countries support artistic roller skating most?

Andrew: Europe is the largest supporter of a skating body, and America is also a very big supporter, as well as Argentina.

Jason: Is there any prize money at any of these competitions. To my knowledge, the only prize money in the sport is if you place first at a world championship event.

Jason: So only the top position for the most prestigious championship gets a monetary reward for their work?

Andrew: Yep, only the top.

Jason: So throughout your career, obviously, you would have had to have been coached. Have you had the same coach since the beginning? Or have you had multiple coaches.

Andrew: From the beginning I've had the same coach, Susan Brooks, who's always been supportive of me, always been supportive of my skating, and she's been to every competition I've been to, really.

Jason: Andrew, I believe you've had a very busy last three months, skating all over the world. When and where have you been competing?

Andrew: Including the World Cup semi-final in Italy in May; the Oceania championships between Australia and New Zealand, in New Zealand in June; July, in Sydney, in the Australian National Championships.

Jason: I also believe you were very successful in all those competitions. In Italy, you had a personal best. In New Zealand, you won the competition coming first. In the beginning of July, in Sydney, you again came first and also won the senior skater of the year for 2024.

Andrew: To think that I'm in a community with skaters who have competed in multiple world championships, and to think that I'm up against the best in the world, and it is quite an achievement in itself.

Jason: Congratulations on those achievements. So after you retire from skating, what do you plan to do next?

Andrew: I would very much like to be an international level official, which would mean I would work on the World Skate platform and judge competitions worldwide.

Jason: Well, I can't wait to see that come to fruition for you sometime in the future. Well, thank you, Andrew and Liz for your time today and taking us a mile in your shoes.

Andrew: Thank you.

Liz: Thank you for having me.

Jason: And if you would like to support Andrew in any way, can reach him on his email, Andrew, underscore, Beattie 02, at yahoo.com, and Beattie is spelled B, E, A, T, T, I, E. Thank you listener for tuning into my podcast A Mile In My Shoes on RTRFM 92.1. I'm your host. Jason Bodle, thank you for your time.