

*It was very*

# CONTROVERSIAL

## to use poms with the boys...

In 2006, Ian Rodley created the now award winning team the Dazl Diamonds. They are the official BCA Championship winners and they have appeared on the Secret Millionaire. Also featuring on their repertoire is a music video and national TV appearances.

Why?

Because they are the 'Billy Elliots' of 2012 and one of the only all boys cheer dance teams.

Director Ian is behind the team. He acknowledges that the reason the team is so successful is due to the constant hard work done by them. He accepts the fact the team constantly have to fundraise and aware of the deprivation they can sometimes face.

"I think that cheer dance gives them an escape and helps them to forget about other issues, which in turn helps them express themselves."

Training can be intensive for the boys. "They tend to meet twice a week for an hour and a half, but a big event can demand sessions of 3-4 hours each time. Cheer dance is also physically demanding; it can always be perfected, from technique to individual skill. It needs physical and mental fitness."

The talented director also choreographs the routines for the teams. "When I started, we were criticised for being too fast. I knew I had to develop it further. Our team do a specific style of cheer dance and now other squads are catching onto our style, which is amazing!" They were also the first BCA group in which all boys use pom poms.

In 2012 the group were lucky

enough to be approached by David King, an individual who had interest in DAZL as a charity and wanted to find out more.

It was then revealed he was part of Channel 4's "Secret Millionaire"

"People think cheerleading is weak and just props up the football side lines. This is not the case!"

programme and after work with the group, he donated £10,000.

"The money has supported young people (over two hundred) to attend at least three cheer dance competitions.

It has also supported the weekly sessions and helped the young people who have faced financial hardship. We have also used the money to

support holiday activities, using artists to put on workshops and free contemporary dance sessions." The programme also helped to publicise the group and make them become a well-known name.

Historically, cheerleading has been known as strictly female based, although it was originally men who created it and performed first.

However, Ian hopes the Dazl Diamonds can convince people it is anything but feminine. "They need to attend a cheer dance session and they will understand it is anything but [feminine]. I also feel they look at cheerleaders as weak and just to prop up the sidelines at football!"

"These boys are athletes like any others. They dedicate their lives to their sport, training hard and perfecting their disciplines. Their uniforms are virtually the same as gymnastics; as are many of the skills with a cheerleading routine."

Their performances are very well done. "It has the added element of



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stunting and jump combinations with a small proportion on dance. I feel people’s perception is wrong and they should try it to see what it takes.”

To transport a group to competitions isn’t always easy. “Some of the group’s younger members are from low income families and parents don’t have access to transport.”



The Dazl Team

We aimed to

# CHALLENGE

perceptions

Therefore, the coaches either drive or buses are hired.

Again, proving the commitment to the group that some of the members have, some will walk if it is a local event. If it is for a competition, the group will fundraise which is often something fun in which they can all get involved.

The Dazl Diamonds have also had national success in the British Cheerleading Association championships. The star quality needed was evident in the group.

“In terms of star qualities they all have a lot of passion and they are all characters! I think this comes across in their performances.”

The boys also featured in the music video that accompanied the single “Beautiful World” by DJ Tiesto vs Mark Knights. The reason the group were drawn to the video was the running theme of adversity, and differences between people.

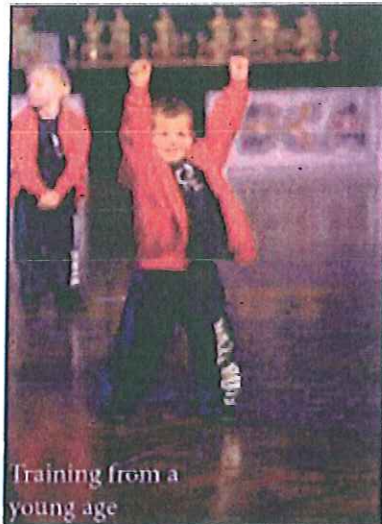
“It was about us all being different. I was sold”.

It demanded a ten hour long day film shoot with a film crew. “We had to create a routine to the track and it was then edited. The real work was doing all the individual scenes from the story board.”

With the Dazl Diamonds oozing success and ambition, it is easy to see why they are constantly growing as a team.

The team shows that cheer dance is far from short skirts and matching hairstyles. It requires great skill, strength, and determination.

“My advice to any males who want to get into the sport would be to give it a go, dare to be different and stand out from the crowd. If you want to be: physically fit, not scared of hard work, are driven by competition, and being the best you can be, then this is the sport for you”.



Training from a young age

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