

Zoe seeks advice from young skating champ

BY AARON TINNEY

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DANCING on Ice star Zoe Salmon is taking advice before tomorrow's show kicks off from a 12-year-old Ulster skating champion.

Forget Torvill and Dean, the Bangor-born beauty has turned home for tips before her first live performance with partner Matt Evers. Former Blue Peter host Zoe, 29, met local ice princess Dempsey Andrews when she did a turn on the children's show aged 10. "I'm so nervous before the show that I've been calling Dempsey for the past week to give me tips," Zoe said yesterday.

"She was so amazing when she came on Blue Peter that we kept in touch. She was so good that she makes me wish I'd learnt to figure skate that

has had her name in lights.

Her trophy cabinet at home bulges with 15 gold medals from UK Open competitions and her skills have been featured on a special children's edition of BBC's Sportsround.

As the dainty protege took her twice-daily practice at Dundonald yesterday, Zoe was getting set for her big night.

She had her first practice at the studio rink in London in front of Olympic champions and hosts Torvill and Dean.

"They're like my new set of parents – wonderful and inspirational," Zoe said.

"It was fine practising in front of them, but it's a mix of terror and excitement for Sunday. It's one of the most dangerous reality shows you can do – so more fool me for signing up."

Zoe said she has had to turn into a tomboy ahead of the show because she's getting so banged up on the ice.

"I've had cuts and bruises, and it's scary the amount of times I nearly lost my fingers," she said.

"But it's turned me into a bit of a lad and I've started to embrace all the falls, showing off the bruises and cuts I get every day.

"I make mistakes all the time – I just hope I can hold it together tomorrow."

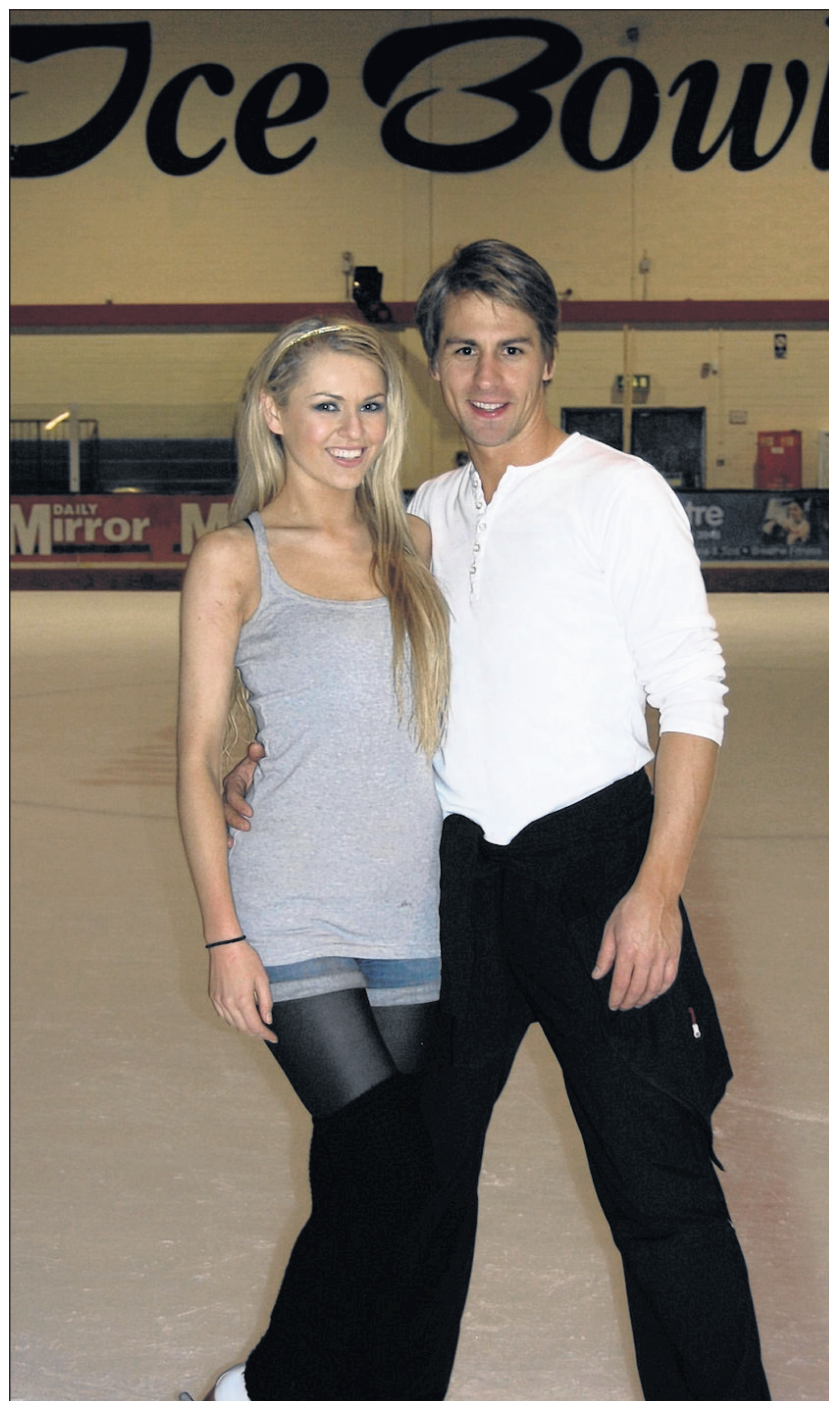
Zoe will be up against former topless model Melinda Messenger, chat show host Coleen Nolan, undercover reporter Donal McIntyre, and EastEnders star Gemma Bissix.

Pop star Jessica Taylor, TV host Michael Underwood, and ex-Hollyoaks actor Jeremy Edwards will also be strapping on their skates, along with rugby ace Ellery Hanley and singer Ray Quinn.

Zoe's hoping her daredevil adventures on Blue Peter, from F1 racing to wing-walking thousands of feet in the air, will give her the edge to survive.

She also hinted yesterday that her new boyfriend, Belfast Hollyoaks actor Gerard McCarthy, will come along to cheer her on.

Dancing On Ice is on tomorrow night at 7pm on UTv.



KEEPING THEIR COOL: Zoe Salmon with TV skating partner Matt Evers at Dundonald Ice Bowl

Heat is on for ice contenders

BY ANDREW JOHNSTON

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ZOE'S ice partner Matt Evers has hailed her as one of the best contestants he's worked with.

The American figure skater, 32, told the News Letter: "Of all the partners I've had, both professional as well as celebs, Zoe works the hardest."

"From day one Zoe's been keen. She's there before I get there – I try to beat her into the rink – and she's eager to stay on the ice afterwards."

And going by his record, he has a good chance of taking the Ulster beauty all the way.



WINNER: Suzanne Shaw
PICTURE: Joel Ryan/PA

Evers has previously partnered Bonnie Langford – finishing third – Lisa Scott-Lee from the pop group Steps – sixth. And he helped Hear'Say singer Suzanne Shaw, who won a hard-fought first.

But already emerging as favourite to clinch the title is former X Factor star Ray Quinn.

Bookie Paddy Power has him at 10/11 to win, with former Liberty X stunner Jessica Taylor hot on his heels at 4/1.

Tomorrow will see one female bow out of the competition and it's Loose Women panelist and singer Coleen Nolan that could be bidding farewell if the bookie's odds are anything to go by. She's the 11/8 favourite to get voted off.

Sharon McHugh from Paddy Power said: "If Dancing on Ice was judged purely on looks, Zoe would be the red-hot favourite."

"But she'll have to get her skates on and up her game to catch up with the mighty Quinn."

IN BRIEF

Probe after body discovered in lough

ENNISKILLEN: The body of a man has been discovered in Lough Erne, police said yesterday. The victim was found at 2pm yesterday near the police station in Enniskillen by a passer-by. Detectives do not believe the death is suspicious.

Hijacked woman punched in face

LARNE: A 20-year-old woman was punched in the face during an attempted car hijacking in the town yesterday. The incident happened at 5.45am on the Olderfleet Road after a man wearing a blue and white hooded top threatened the victim, who had been driving her black Peugeot 206. It is understood the woman had been on her way to work. He punched her a number of times in the face before dragging her from the vehicle. A struggle ensued, and the assailant ran off in the direction of Lodge Road. The woman was left with injuries to her face and in a very distressed condition. Police are appealing for witnesses to the incident, in particular anyone who saw three males wearing dark clothing in the Harbour car park.

Man shot in hand and leg

TOWN NAME: A 38-year-old man was shot in the hand and leg in north Belfast, police said yesterday. It happened at Estoril Park at around 3.30am. His injuries are not believed to be life-threatening. Detectives appealed for anybody with information to contact them.

Arrest over gun find

BELFAST: A 35-year-old man was in police custody last night after a gun was recovered from premises at Distillery Street in the west of the city. A number of other items were also found during a search by police which took place at around 2.30pm yesterday. Army technical officers also attended the scene, although they had vacated it shortly after 5pm. The items have been taken away for further examination.

Suspected firearm

BELFAST: A suspected firearm was recovered from an alleyway at Harmin Park early yesterday. A PSNI spokesman said Army Technical Officers have taken the suspected forearm away for further examination.

Cinema goes 3D

BELFAST: A new screen being installed at a cinema in the city is set to take movie-lovers into a new dimension. The Odeon cinema in the Victoria Square shopping complex has this week installed a digital 3D screen, hoping to give viewers an experience which will leap out at them. The cinema will open its doors next month with a first-look screening of the new Disney film, Bolt, a canine caper voiced by John Travolta. The film will hit the 3D screens a week before standard cinema screens on February 6.



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