



Charlie White and Meryl Davis

PURE GOLD

MERYL DAVIS AND CHARLIE WHITE CELEBRATE THEIR OLYMPIC WIN AND LIFE AHEAD

If you take a quick look at ice dancing team Meryl Davis and Charlie White's competition results from their 2013-14 season, there's one word you'll come across every time: *first*.

Before their biggest win at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, where they became the first American ice dancing team to win Olympic gold, the talented pair achieved a series of wins at the senior level by placing first at the 2013 U.S. International Figure Skating Classic, Skate America, the NHK Trophy, the Grand Prix Final and the 2014 U.S. National Championships.

"As an athlete, you focus on preparation, and you focus on readiness for whatever you're trying to tackle," Davis says.

"It was a very natural progression for us," White adds.

But there's another word associated with these two Olympians: *partnership*. Paired in 1997 when Charlie was 8 and Meryl was 9, the duo has been skating together ever since. That's

17 years of hard work and dedication to a sport they're both completely in love with, and it also makes them the longest-running ice dancing partnership in the history of U.S. figure skating. But that's not to say that at such a young age starting out, everything went smoothly.

"As a 9-year-old girl, I think my initial impression was just, you know, cooties," Davis says, laughing. "And you know, skating with a boy and being in close proximity to a boy and having to hold his hand was such a strange thing at that age."

White agrees with those sentiments, noting that they while they were both pretty shy, their mutual love for ice dancing and the support from their parents pushed them to develop better teamwork skills.

"I think for both of us, having our parents as role models allowed us to really understand how relationships should work," White says. "If one partner is willing to put in more work than the other, it's going to cause

issues, and that was something we never had to worry about."

For the Michigan natives (Davis is from Plymouth; White is from Ann Arbor), their 2014 Olympic gold win led to a whirlwind of opportunities, including the chance to compete on ABC's *Dancing with the Stars* (DWTS). "We were asked (to be on the show) I think the day after we won in Sochi," Davis recalls.

In an attempt to explain this fast-paced experience at the Olympics, winning a gold medal and then immediately starting to train for DWTS, White describes the journey as something like a continuous slide onto a huge ramp that faced no obstacles, no walls. It simply shot them both into the air, propelling them forward at full speed.

"All of the stress and pressure that we had been building up for the Olympics was suddenly gone, but we were busier than we've probably ever been in our lives," White says.

Although Davis and White soon found out that moving on the floor and dancing was quite different from gliding on the ice, Davis and her dance partner, Maksim Chmerkovskiy, made it through to the end. Not only taking home the Mirror Ball Trophy, but also becoming America's new favorite dance couple along the way. "I just kept thinking to myself, 'I can't believe that the last couple months of my life have actually been real,'" Davis says.

"She was 10 shoulders above the rest of us," White says. "But that wasn't because she was trying to win. It was because she was having the time of her life, and I think that came across on TV."

The ice dancing team is taking a break this competitive season to reflect on the last few months. In the fall, both will be taking a few classes at the University of Michigan, where Davis is studying anthropology with a minor in Italian, and White is studying political science.

They'll also be doing a show in December, too – called *Shall We Dance on Ice* – that combines skating on ice and dancing on the floor. Davis and White will partner with each other and also with their DWTS partners, as well. "I think that life can be so exciting," Davis says. "It can be so unexpected in so many ways."

As for competing in the 2018 Winter Olympics... well, we'll just have to wait and see.

👑 — Audrey LaForest

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"Ice dancing is a little more theatrical (than pair skating). It's more based on dance," Davis says. "Pair skating is a little more athletic. The tricks are a little bigger."