

Interview with Rudy Galindo

By Scott Foval

The Champions On Ice Tour visits the United Center in Chicago on May 6th, this coming Sunday, at 1PM. Tickets are available through the tour website, www.championsonice.com, through Ticketmaster, or at the United Center box office. I caught up on the phone with former World Junior Men's Single and Pairs (with Kristi Yamaguchi) Champion, and HIV-positive gay role model Rudy Galindo on the COI tour bus.

Q: Tell me about the Champions On Ice tour this year.

RG: Well we started in Richmond, VA, and opening night came after a long week of rehearsals. My program is set to a "Dreamgirls" theme, and I'm really excited about it.

Q: Have the all the performers gelled as a group yet?

RG: Well we have a really talented group this year, and yes, I would say we're gelling. Its my twelfth year on the tour, so I'm kind of the senior man here.

Q: What do you think has led you here, to this point, where coaching is half of your focus?

RG: I've always had a passion for skating, my coaches have been great models for me, and have made it easy for me to see myself as moving in this direction. I love working with the kids I coach, and I can see myself coaching for a long time. I'll keep performing, though, as long as my body holds up.

Q: What is different now, compared to earlier in your skating career?

RG: I'm more mature now, I have a better sense of what the audience wants. I feel I'm more polished at entertaining, and my experience has allowed me to develop a higher professional level, at artistry, entertaining, and being professional in general.

Q: What effect is touring with the younger performers having on you, and on them? What about being 30 years into skating, but still touring--who is the real Rudy Galindo now?

RG: They do come up to me about my costuming, and I give some coaching, advice on enhancing certain aspects of performances. That's just part of having been on it so long. People do see me as being a fixture, having been on it so long, working with the kids, and making a lot of money...

Q: What do you hope people are getting out of your performances?

RG: When people see the final outcome, people don't always realize how much goes into it. We have 12 to 14 hours a day of practices, and numerous tech dress rehearsals. I just want people to enjoy themselves and my performances.

Q: Shifting gears, you've received a lot of attention and accolades here in Chicago, especially since the Chicago Gay Games; how do you feel about being a role model for the community?

RG: I don't know, I kind of think of it as being an expectation now. I don't try to see myself that way but I accept it and I'm proud of it—I guess I just expect it now.



Q: Do you feel comfortable with that moniker?

RG: Yes, I am now...it has been since I won the National title that I've been referred to as "out" by newspapers, etc. I don't try to put myself out there that way, I just try to work hard, keep skating and coaching, and do my thing. It is funny to me, because its only been since 1996. I thought I was out there before, but I just try to be a helper...not a role model. Its just funny, that label. (Laughing)

Q: What does the future hold for you as a skater and a coach? Will you be involved in the Gay Games in the future?

RG: I think that in the future I have a lot to offer to younger skaters, and I love working with the kids I coach, so I see myself still doing that in the future. I hope so, in the future I would love to be involved if they ask me.

Many thanks to Rudy Galindo for taking the time to talk to ChicagoPride.com. ~SF