

Interview with Johnny Weir

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 three-time U.S. National Champion and U.S. National Bronze Medalist Johnny Weir on the COI tour bus.

Q: Since the Olympics you were the most talked about skater besides Sacha Cohen...you earned a lot of respect from the gay community and public in general for rising above the press hype. How has that affected your career?

JW: There are always a group of fans that always watch skating events and follow the sport, but the Olympics is such a larger spectrum of people who see the performances and press coverage. I think people like it that I am able to be an individual, and that I'm comfortable being myself in public or speaking to a reporter. I realize I made some mistakes in the past, but I still stand by my previous statements that I'm proud of being an individual. There are a lot of free spirits out there and people who haven't yet found their way yet that go to the events and thank me for setting an example, and for showing them that they don't have to conform to a cookie cutter vision of what you should be in order to be successful.

Q: You became known for your costumes, and especially the swan costume in your Olympics performances—you've even been spoofed in the movie *Blades of Glory*. How do you feel about it?

JW: The swan actually was designed by a woman in Russia whom is a friend of my choreographer, and we developed the idea into an interpretation of the swan as a one piece costume without being too over the top. I actually thought it was hilarious. I was a little concerned before seeing it just in case the movie was a little mean spirited, but I thought it was great.

Q: How has life changed for you since the Olympics? Are you recognized more often?

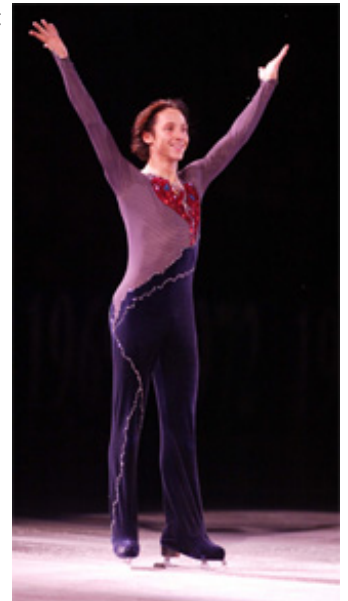
JW: You know, considering it was my first Olympics, and I don't have a lot of international titles; I think it is a great thing that people want to know me off the ice as well as on the ice.

Q: How are things going this year?

JW: Well this season has been a little bit rough for me--it was a hard summer last year. We did a really long tour, then after the tour I got dumped after a three year relationship, and then I had to turn around and immediately start training again to get prepared for the season. My season didn't go as well as I wanted—it was a lot of hard things rolled into one. I lost my national title, and then didn't do so well at the World Championships, but hopefully this year will be better. I'm working hard and hopeful about the coming season.

Q: And what about that? How have you changed?

JW: Well five years ago from today I wasn't at the stature I am now. So I was very--kind of cookie cutter, and was listening a lot to things other people were saying and worrying about peoples opinions more so than now. Once I was knocked down by the Federation, and had to come back to



win my first national title, and I had to really dig deep and find myself. That's when I started just saying, "you know what, screw everything else--I'm just going to do what makes me happy and I'm going to do it the way I want to. That hasn't changed since that year, and I don't think it will ever change just because I see no point in acting one way or doing things one way just to please a group of people.

Q: Where do you want to be in five years?

JW: In five years I will be doing things the same way and will come back to be Olympic Champion and World Champion.

Q: Wow, that's really throwing it down!

JW: Well I don't think you should change yourself to please other people...that's stupid, so I'm living my life for me, and I'm happy to say that in five years that's where I want to be.

Q: You travel a lot, where are you living now?

JW: I live in Newark, Delaware. That's where I live and train. My father has a back injury and isn't able to work, and my mom works two jobs, and my little brother is going to college—there's a lot of financial stuff that I need to be there to help my family with. My coach (Priscilla Hill) is great, as she has been there with me.

Q: What's happening for the rest of this year?

JW: I'll be doing Champions on Ice through June, and then I'll go to Japan to do some performances there, and then I'll start getting prepared for the next season.

Q: What are the next accomplishments you want to achieve?

JW: Well a gold medal of course, but I've always said I wanted to skate as long as my body holds up. I've been doing some coaching, but it isn't my passion. I think I'll always keep one foot in and one foot out. I do have a passion for fashion though.

Q: So are you designing a line, are we going to see Jonny Weir on Project Runway?

JW: Well I've been sketching for years, but I'm going to have to have someone teach me to sew. I don't have any plans on going on any reality show...ever! (Laughing)

Q: Do you go to shows, do you do shows?

JW: I've been in two runway shows so far, but I don't have a lot of time to go because I'm training.

Many thanks to Johnny Weir for taking the time to talk to ChicagoPride.com. ~SF