

# A HOP, SKIP AND A JUMP

## Comet Skippers hope to show America they've got talent

Ian Howard | Staff Writer

Three senior Comet Skippers have taken jump roping to the next level by auditioning for *America's Got Talent*, senior Teddy Thieken said. According to Thieken, the group is motivated not only by the show's million dollar prize, but also by improving jump roping's reputation as a sport.

"Really, we just want to get the sport out there and get it recognized and known," Thieken said. "Our ultimate goal is to get it into the Olympics, and just by publicizing it, we want people to appreciate it."

According to senior Comet Skipper Lauren Zambello, publicizing the sport is not an entirely new concept for them. Zambello said that they have traveled around the world spreading the joy of competitive and professional jump rope.

"We do a lot of traveling for workshops and performances and during the summer we go to camps, like we went for the last three years to Germany over the summer," Zambello said. "Some of our team has gone to worlds and this year it's in England, or South Africa the time before that, and so we've been all over the U.S and [are] starting to branch out to the world too."

Thieken said that the group has had only a small amount of preparation time despite their great results. The group has only been together for a tiny amount of time, according to Thieken. Some members are not even on the Comet Skippers and have never practiced with Thieken or Zambello before.

"We only had one weekend to make up our routine because we flew in somebody from Louisiana and somebody who lives in Cincinnati," Thieken said. "We weren't sure what was going to happen."

According to senior Comet Skipper Jeress Pendleton, one of the biggest issues for the team is their inability to practice altogether. Between all of their busy schedules and the fact that a member of the team lives all the way across the country, there is little room to practice, according to Pendleton.

"We've been looking at flights and stuff and whenever [the member that lives in Louisiana is] available is whenever we're all available," Pendleton said. "We all have jobs so we're all trying to work out schedules and request certain days off so we can have time to practice."

As a potential act on *America's Got Talent*, practice is obviously incredibly important, Pendleton said. The group will have to juggle multiple routines in order to do well in the show, according to Pendleton.

"We thought we did well," Pendleton said. "We did the best to our ability so now what we're looking at is that we need to start practicing more. If we do get that opportunity to be on the show, we're going to need back-up routines. If we don't have those routines

we're going to be even more behind."

Zambello said that appearing on television is not as big of a deal for the already overwhelming publicity felt by the Comet Skippers on a regular basis.

"I feel like we've already done so many performances at this point that it being on TV or for a basketball game with a bunch of people it almost feels like the same thing," Zambello said.

Unlike previous jump roping acts on *America's Got Talent*, the group, originating from the Comet Skippers, has a progressive fusion style, according to Thieken.

"We used to have a more traditional style of jumping where you'd just do tricks and try to make them as difficult as possible," Thieken said. "But recently at jump rope events we've invited Japanese jumpers, and [there are] jumpers from Belgium, and [fusion style] is what there forte is. [Fusion is] a lot more entertaining, and it involves the crowd more."

The fusion style also equates to a better orientation to television, Zambello said.

"I think we have a different competitive edge than some of the other people that have tried out before," Zambello said. "We have a different style that is more appealing to an audience than maybe the other teams before that have tried."

While the group has yet to hear back from *America's Got Talent*, Thieken said that he is very optimistic about the results.

"We went in for our first audition, and we did pretty well," Thieken said. "We didn't have any misses; it was flawless."

