

# DRIVEN *to* SUCCEED

Coral Gables High School Coach Mo Marmesh dishes on the championship program >>> By Nikki Hope

**A dynasty is derived from years of hard work and a long resume of results. The Gablettes have carved their impressive dynasty through a fierce drive for perfection, emphasis on technique, and a never-ending push for overall success with a philosophy of student first, dancer second. The program, established in 1975, had national winning streaks at National Dance Alliance (NDA) from 1998-2002, 2009-2011 and again in 2013 and 2014. We sat down with Coach Mo Marmesh and got the inside scoop on what makes her dancers and her school shine at competitions.**



**Nikki: What kind of dancer do you look for during tryouts and what is one key element that is essential for a Coral Gables dancer?**

Mo: We look for dancers with signs of some technical experience and potential. We also require our dancers to be strong academically! We have the highest GPA requirement of any program in our school, and require multiple teacher recommendations for each candidate. The key element to a Gablette is being a well-rounded student, first and foremost. We also want well-rounded dancers who are willing to work hard to stay on the same level as teams from magnet schools or [teams] with more studio trained dancers.

**Nikki: As a team, what are your overall goals at the beginning of each season?**

Mo: I pick a motto for each year, usually connecting to one of the goals I want the team to work on. This year our motto was "turn it up" because we really needed to improve our turning technique. Our overall goal is to maintain our traditions by keeping up the kicking, since that is what we're known for, but also to evolve and show that we can do more than kick. It really bothers us when people think that's all we can do; we also do hip hop, contemporary, jazz, and pom too!

**Nikki: If you could describe your team in one word, what would it be and why?**

Mo: Ambitious! We practice year round, perform during football season, put on a fall show, go hard during competition season, put on a spring show, and then we're back to point one at summer camp. Last year we took five routines to nationals, and though it's a lot of work, it has strengthened our dancers and bonded [them as] teammates. We rarely say no to a performance request; we always try to make it work and are willing to do what is necessary to represent our team and our school to the highest standards.

**Nikki: How do your athletes inspire you?**

Mo: I love watching someone have that breakthrough moment; when they land a trick or hit a technical skill they've been afraid of, that look of shock and awe is beaming from their face - it makes me happy! It also motivates me to come up with something more challenging for them to try; I never want them to settle. I watch a lot of college videos to look for trends that will eventually trickle down to the high school level and then try to find a way to put a Gablette twist on it. I also love watching them hit a routine! When they walk off [the performance floor] and know that they danced together and did the best they could, then that's all that I can ask for. That moment on stage is untouchable, beautiful and special. I experienced it my senior year as a Gablette, and am privileged to have it again, now, as a coach.



## CORAL CONNECTION >>>> TO THE PROS

A number of Coral Gables dance alumni have gone on to successful professional dance careers. "We have several alumni who danced for the NBA Miami Heat Dancers, and this year three of our dancers became Miami Dolphins Cheerleaders," Marmesh says. "We've had alumni dance collegiately. Another of our alumni works with Cirque du Soleil, was an original cast member in the Viva Elvis show, and is currently on the Michael Jackson The Immortal World Tour. Jimmy Arguello, the first male on our team, was on *So You Think You Can Dance* finishing in the top 18 of season three. He was also an assistant choreographer to Mia Michaels on the *Rock of Ages* movie." Rock on!

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