



## ***Dancing Profile***

# **Michael Barr and Vicky Green**

by

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*On the left, Mike wins the International as a junior, dancing with Beverley Scobie; top of the page, top of the podium after winning the Worlds in Australia with Vicky.*



*Right, Vicky wins the ballroom queen title in the area finals, 1966, at the Streatham Locarno, dancing with Patrick Johnson. Below, a very serious young Michael dancing with Pauline Seymour to the music of Victor Silvester.*



THE WORLD OF BALLROOM DANCING IS A VERY small one—as the story of Michael Barr and Vicky Green clearly illustrates.

Vicky began her dancing career at the age of two when she attended stage school.



Later she went in for ballet but it was not until she started secondary school that she became interested in ballroom. One of the girls in her class went to a local studio and Vicky decided to go along too. That girl's name was Evelyn Wade.

After a couple of years of medal work, Vicky began to compete. She came 5th in the Star and then, in 1962, won the International. A few months later she became an adult and partnered up with Patrick Johnson. They reached the last fourteen in the International but their partnership ended when Vicky became increasingly serious about a boy who was not at all interested in dancing.

Patrick continued to compete, ultimately partnering Vicky's former classmate, Evelyn, to come second in the 1970 World's Amateur Latin. Vicky could have been lost to dancing for ever—but for the intervention of Mr. Barr.

It was Michael's parents who first kindled his interest in dancing. They patronised a studio in Harrow which organised special children's classes during the summer holidays. Michael, then aged nine, soon became keen. Like Vicky, he started to compete after a couple of years of taking medals and, again like Vicky, won the International.

That was in 1961 when his partner was Beverley Scobie, who also danced for a while



with Robin Short. Soon after they became adults, Michael and Beverley split up since her parents had decided to emigrate to America.

During the next two years Michael took a complete break from dancing, doing all the things that he would not otherwise have been able to do. As time went by though, he missed dancing more and more and began to watch competitions. Then the bug got hold of him again and he teamed up with a girl called Tina Bedford. They danced together for a year without achieving any major successes and ultimately parted.

That was when Len Armstrong tipped Mike off about the split between Vicky and Patrick Johnson. It is also the point at which that "small world" becomes smaller than ever.

Michael had a problem. He did not have Vicky's phone number, nor did he know her address—and there are an awful lot of Greens in the London directory. However, he did have a friend called Richard Gleave who just happened to be dancing with a girl called Janet Wade who just happened to be Evelyn Wade's sister.

Not that it was quite that simple. Michael did not want Vicky to know about his intentions prior to him calling her. He therefore rang Richard at Janet's home and Richard and Janet went prowling around Vicky's street one dark evening to check up on her address. Michael was then able to find the number from the book.

Although Michael and Vicky became dancing partners, Vicky continued to go out with her boyfriend for the next eighteen months. In the end, of course, she had to choose between her boyfriend and dancing and it was dancing that won.

Michael and Vicky came 7th in the 1968 British and moved up to 5th the following year behind Gleave, Chatt, Charlton and Root. Their first win in the British came in 1972. They repeated that success in 1973 and then immediately announced their decision to turn professional.

May 1973 was a very eventful month. Just one week after the British they were married and escaped to Corfu for a honeymoon before returning to their new home near Watford and their new career as professional dancers.



*Left, dancing must be good for the figure; this chubby young man grew up in to the future champion*



*Victory kiss after winning their first "British" in 1972.*



This change of status involves a far greater adjustment than most people realise.

First of all there is the question of demonstrations. Although the same material is used in both dems and competitions, in a dem you know exactly how many bars of music you have to dance to and you know too that there will be no other couples to obstruct you. It is therefore possible, and necessary, to rehearse the whole programme, including the introduction of cabaret style entrances and exits. What is more, this programme must be capable of being adapted to any size of floor—a factor which is often an unknown quantity until the demonstrators actually arrive at the venue.

Frequently, professionals are required not only to give a show but also to judge competitions. In order to be eligible to judge, you must first pass the appropriate examinations. Not wishing to miss bookings on this count, Michael and Vicky took their theory books away on their honeymoon but for some reason best known to themselves those books remained unopened until their return to England.

Once they did get down to studying, they soon passed their exams in both the ballroom and Latin branches. They then came face to face with the problem of judging.

There is no formal training for this and it initially presented real difficulties. For the last few years Michael and Vicky had had their

eyes glued solely on those couples who were better than themselves. To switch to watching Juniors, Juveniles, Pre-Champs and Novices required a major adjustment in their critical criteria.

Teaching, too, was new and strange but the Barrs have quickly come to achieve the same competence in these new fields as they display in their own dancing.

The only remaining problem is that of earning a living. Vicky, who had been working in the wages department of an employment agency, gave up her job when they turned professional. Michael, however, is still employed by a firm of marine insurance brokers. It is becoming increasingly difficult for him to get the time off which dancing demands but with mortgage rates at their current astronomical levels and other prices going up by leaps and bounds, it is going to be difficult to live by dancing alone.

On the competition front, they had to wait the statutory three months after relinquishing their amateur status before they could compete as professionals but made an immediate impact as soon as they were eligible, coming straight into the top six.

Having achieved 5th place in the 1974 U.K. Championships, they now have to begin the hard fight to edge further up the ladder towards the coveted number one position—a fight in which we wish them every success.