

EXCLUSIVE: I DANCE ON ICE WITH TORVILL & DEAN

By JULIE McCAFFREY

SHOOTING across the ice rink on your belly and ending up with your nose at their boots isn't the ideal way to meet Torvill and Dean.

I'd told a few white lies about my skating credentials to persuade the Olympic legends to grant me a coaching session. But when they see my dramatic nose-dive they quickly realise I'm a hopeless case.

"I thought you said you went skating every week?" frowns Chris. "I did." I plead. "In the Christmas holidays when I was 13."

It's 22 years since Jayne, 48, and Chris, 47, became the nation's darlings by winning Olympic gold with their passionate ice dancing to Ravel's Bolero. The House of Commons hushed and the Nine O'Clock News was delayed so that 24 million viewers could see all 12 judges in the former Yugoslavia score them a perfect six – a feat never achieved before or since.

The classical music track soared into the top 10. A housing estate in their native Nottingham was christened Tordean. And their famous names were even emblazoned on the side of two Russian refrigerated cargo ships.

Now, for the first time in almost a decade, Jayne and Chris are back together on ice, training and choreographing 10 celebrities in ITV1's Dancing On Ice competition.

Here at the studio, Bonnie Langford, The Bill's Stefan Booth and Sean Wilson (who played Martin Platt in Coronation Street) whirl and twirl around the ice.

Andrea Mclean is tucking into a baked potato before a training session. Later Dame Kelly Holmes, Andi Peters, Andrea Mclean, Gaynor Faye, John Barrowman and David Seaman will turn up to learn their new routines. But Tamara Beckwith has already gone, voted off by the judges.

The first show wowed more than 11 million viewers, and it's testament to their genius that Torvill and Dean have transformed the celebs from novices into ice aces in only eight weeks.

Now, though, they have a real klutz on their hands.

But while my first faltering steps don't impress, surely my purple outfit – a tribute to Jayne's Bolero costume – will.

"Typical," she sighs, rolling her eyes. "All the gear and no idea."

The first thing to learn is, ironically, how to fall. "Most people stiffen up when they think they're about to keel over," explains Chris, who, sadly, isn't wearing the crotch-clinging leggings I always admired. "You need to loosen up and sit back into your fall."

After crashing on to my bum 16 times I get it right. Now it's time to skate forward. Jayne prizes my fingers from the barrier and takes my hands to keep me steady.

BUT while she elegantly glides backwards, I skid, slide and flap around as if I'm wearing flippers.

Chris has pity in his eyes as he watches me struggle to perfect the most basic moves. It takes a good hour and countless knee-bashings to get it right. But when I do I feel euphoric.

"It's good to know you're enjoying yourself," shouts Chris as I whoosh past. "But you really don't need to scream 'Wheee!' as you skate."

Now there's no stopping me. Literally. Jayne's smile gradually fades into a look of horror as I skid towards her, screaming in terror.

With a split second to spare she leaps out of the way and I slam into the

BEST FOR WEEKEND TV

barriers and clatter to the ground. Worried faces loom over me as I lie in a crumpled heap. "Time for a break," suggests Chris.

Over a cup of tea, the pair finish each other's sentences like long-time lovers. Jayne admits she had a crush on him when they first met. But Chris says: "We're more like an old married couple. We never had time to date – we were so focused on skating."

Despite the entire country willing them to skate off into the sunset together, Jayne wed sound engineer Phil Christensen in 1990 and lives in Eastfield, East Sussex, with their three-year-old son Kieran.

Chris married Canadian skater Isabelle Duchesnay, but they divorced in 1993. He now lives in Denver, Colorado, with his second wife, former world champion skater Jill Trenary, and sons Jack, seven, and Sam, five.

Torvill and Dean's competitive last hurrah was at the 1988 Olympics – where uproar greeted the award of only a bronze medal after another explosive performance.

After a few years on the professional circuit with Chris, Jayne became a busy mum, rarely venturing back on to the ice, but Chris's American TV show Stars On Ice has scooped two Emmy awards.

Both are thrilled to be skating together again. "It's fantastic to be back," beams Jayne. "We have to push our bodies harder now but we feel as in tune with each other as ever."

Fully recovered from my run-in with the barrier, I'm filled with foolish bravado and beg Chris to pick me up and spin me around the ice.

He looks me up and down. "OK, put your hands around my waist and keep your feet together or your blades will slice open my arteries," he says.

Just as I'm enjoying a sneaky feel of his firm waist, my legs lift off the ice and we whirl around so fast the room becomes a blur. "We can see your knickers," yell cheeky studio staff.

"You can let go of me now," says Chris as he comes to a stop. But I'm so dizzy I have to cling to his leg and concentrate on not being sick.

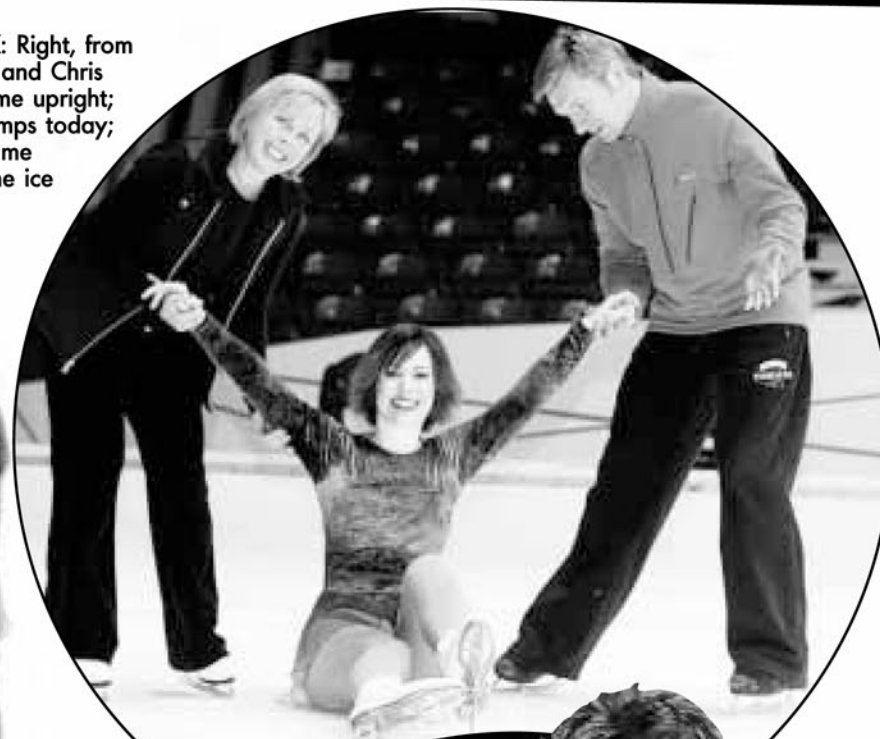
Limping off the ice with knees the size of footballs and a numb bum, I ask my skating heroes how long it will be before I can do the fast-as-lightning spins and double axel jumps on my own.

"Oh, about 10 or 11," says Chris. Coaching sessions? "No," he replies. "Years."

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●Dancing On Ice is on ITV1 tonight at 6.45pm, with the results show at 9pm.

ICE WORK: Right, from top: Jayne and Chris try to get me upright; the ex-champs today; Chris spins me dizzy on the ice



BLADE RUNNER: Chris whisks Julie around the ice

Pictures: IAN VOGLER

Screaming in terror, I skid towards Jayne

HOW THEY RATE CELEB SKATERS



Andi Peters

JAYNE: "Andi was stung last week when Jason said he looked like a Teletubby. He used to gorge on chocolate bars between the sessions but this week he's been more disciplined."

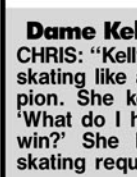
Gaynor Faye

CHRIS: "I had a tingly feeling when Gaynor performed her routine for the second time last Saturday because it was so beautiful. She glowed out there."



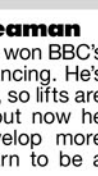
Stefan Booth

JAYNE: "Stefan has ended up with his backside on the ice far more than the others. He needs to have patience and master the basics before doing more complicated, flashy moves."



Dame Kelly Holmes

CHRIS: "Kelly approaches skating like a true champion. She keeps saying: 'What do I have to do to win?' She has the grit skating requires."



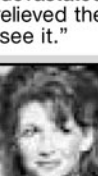
David Seaman

JAYNE: "David won BBC's Strictly Ice Dancing. He's a powerhouse, so lifts are no problem, but now he needs to develop more grace and learn to be a showman."



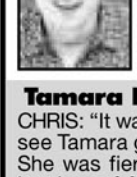
Andrea Mclean

CHRIS: "Definitely the most nervous and accident-prone. She broke a rib and constantly trips over. She found skating really difficult, but she has great support."



Sean Wilson

JAYNE: "The most motivated and focused of the group. He fell flat on his face just off camera last week and was devastated – but he was relieved the viewers didn't see it."



Bonnie Langford

CHRIS: "Even when she whacked her head she got straight back up again and soldiered on. She's in great shape and incorporates amazing dancing moves into her routines."



John Barrowman

JAYNE: "John skated on frozen lakes when he was young, has danced on stage and is strong enough to make lifts look easy. Very committed in training. He'll score highly."



Tamara Beckwith

CHRIS: "It was a shame to see Tamara go last week. She was fiery and feisty, but lots of fun. And who knows how long she would have stayed in if she hadn't prioritised shopping?"



Skate expectations