

Adele-Liane Simpkin

Skill: Hairdressing

From: Crawley
Competed in: WorldSkills 2005, Helsinki
Employer: Trevor Sorbie
Result: Medallion of Excellence

Qualifications

- 9 GCSE's
- NVQ levels 2 and 3 in Hairdressing
- City & Guilds Licentiate



A career in Hairdressing was not Adele-Liane's first choice when she left school at 16. Instead she enrolled upon an NVQ level 2 course in Beauty Therapy at Crawley College. However, it wasn't long before she began to realise that Hairdressing was her real vocation and she went on to gain level 2 and 3 in Hairdressing at the same college. Once qualified, Adele-Liane initially started out at a small local salon but she soon went on to earn herself a place at the renowned Trevor Sorbie salon in Brighton.

How did she get involved in competitions?

"I first began competing when I was at College full time. I really enjoyed the experience and after I had won a few local competitions I was selected to take part in some bigger events."

And how did she get selected to go to WorldSkills?

"I was invited to take part in a competition at L'Oreal Professionnel's London headquarters against 5 other young hairdressers. It was at this trial that I and one other were selected to be put forward to a play-off competition in Derby. In the end the other competitor pulled out, but I still

had to compete and gain a certain number of points to prove I was good enough to be put through to such a tough international competition. It was nerve wracking even at this stage, but I was very determined and was therefore delighted to get through to be part of the UK team."

So what was the training and preparation like for WorldSkills?

"Long! The training took up an awful lot of my free time and at times it felt very hard going but looking back it was all worth it. We also had quite a lot of mental preparation training with our two team leaders who came with us to Helsinki and this was very different but really useful when it came to the competition."

What kind of things did the training involve?

"I had to do a lot of training on areas I was unfamiliar with as WorldSkills tests a particular type of hairdressing that's not common to the work I do commercially. Every Sunday for 6 months I trained with a specialist on men's hair and I also spent two weeks of intensive training at a salon in Gloucester learning techniques that I hadn't covered before."

And how supportive was her employer?

"I was really lucky because my employer was really supportive and flexible about my training. He has a background in competitions and so I think he realised the benefits to both me and the salon by taking part in WorldSkills. He was particularly good about giving me a month off for the intensive training and the competition itself."

So what was WorldSkills like?

"The thing that struck me the most about WorldSkills was the size, it was huge! I was forever getting lost - even just finding my way back from the toilet was a challenge when I was competing as the halls were so big and it was easy to take a wrong turn. It was extremely tiring and stressful at times but it was also really exciting and given the chance I'd love to do it again!"

Was there anything she didn't expect?

"The food was very different from what I'm used to at home. I've always been a fussy eater anyway but I found the catering a bit of a challenge I must admit. I think in the end I managed to survive on Cuppa soups and snickers bars – not the most balanced diet in the world but it got me through!"

And how did you cope with the competition itself?

"I found the presence of the team leaders really supportive. They were always on hand during the breaks and at the end of the day to talk through the things that had gone wrong which really helped me to clear my thoughts and move forward from the difficult parts. It can be really easy to lose perspective when you're so wrapped up in a competition but if you stumble you need to get back on track as soon as possible."

What benefits does Adele-Liane think taking part in WorldSkills has given her?

"From a professional point of view it's made me more organised and disciplined in how I approach work which is a real asset. But I think taking part in WorldSkills has also given me a lot more personal benefits. When I first got involved I was quite shy and used to hold back from saying what I thought. I think the whole experience really brought me out of myself and gave me more confidence. One of the things I was most proud of was winning the John Barnes award for Team Morale which I was awarded at the end of the competition. When I first arrived in Helsinki I never would have thought that would have happened to me!"

So what will she remember most?

"The team spirit! It was so special being part of this amazing team. Although we were all different and had come together from lots of different places, we had this unique goal in common and over the course of the team training and preparation through to the competition itself we bonded and became a really strong team. I'm still in touch with some of the team which is lovely."

And life since WorldSkills?

"I've been lucky to have risen up through the ranks quite quickly since I took part in the competition. When I competed I was an Assistant Hairdresser and I'm now a fully qualified Senior Stylist so I have to admit it's helped my career.

I also had the chance to go to Australia in 2006 to take part in the WorldSkills Youth Forum and to support the UK bid team for WorldSkills 2011. Aside from the travel, it was a great opportunity to be able to put something back into WorldSkills. The Youth Forum involved previous competitors from around the globe looking at the whole event and discussing ways in which it could be made even better. And it goes without saying that it was a fantastic atmosphere when the UK won the 2011 bid."

Has WorldSkills changed anything for you?

"It's made me more confident as a person and also made me realise that a lot's possible if you put your mind to it."

Any words of advice for future competitors?

"The main thing I would say is work really hard and enjoy the experience because it will go really quickly and you're unlikely to do anything like it again. I would encourage anyone to get involved in competitions because there are so many benefits."

And finally, with WorldSkills London 2011 just a few years away, what do you think will be the benefits to young people?

"WorldSkills London 2011 will give young people a chance to see what's out there in terms of skills and career options. I think it will be an amazing event and I certainly hope I'll be there to cheer the team on!"



For more information, please contact the PR Team, UK Skills: 020 7612 9260