



Will Bayley stuns Strictly studio

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"Nothing's gonna bring me down" blared out of the Strictly studio tonight as Will Bayley took to the dance floor for the first time live.

Alongside professional dancer Janette Manrara, the Paralympic champion performed a quickstep to Paolo Nutini's *Pencil Full of Lead*, which soon had the crowd cheering on their feet – and earned him a standing ovation from judge Shirley Ballas.

Speaking before his performance, Will said he wanted to 'inspire people with physical problems'.

"No one would ever say I could dance, but I want to prove to people that I can dance," he commented.

During his first training session he said: "The quickstep is really, really quick I didn't expect it to be so quick.

"Coming in here today for my first session I was really nervous because I didn't know what I could do.

"I was thinking I might be falling over everywhere because my balance was going to be bad.

"I don't think there's a massive expectation on me because of my disability but I want to go out there and show everyone that I can dance."

His dance partner Janette added: "I didn't know what to expect either because I've never dealt with someone with a disability before, but actually everything I've thrown at you, you've done."

Here's what the judges had to say and how they

scored Will:

Shirley Ballas, score 7: “What disability? What limitations? That was absolutely off the chart! You had great energy, great poise and a beautiful frame. You can work on the other ones. Push your strengths, hide your weaknesses. I’ll tell you what that was a magnificent performance.”

Bruno Tonioli, score 7: “Darling you’ve got my heart and you’ve got the nations heart already. I mean you love what you do, you love dancing, you love performing and it shows and you didn’t take a shortcut... You worked hard and it showed.”

Motsi Mabuse, score 7: “You are a true inspiration. The whole time you were dancing I was just like ‘wow’. I felt really touched inside because you give a person the feeling that you have to fight for what you want and you got it! We’ve been talking about energy and you gave it a new definition.”

Craig Revel Horwood, score 5: “I would have liked to see a lot more in hold... The top line in this stance should be quiet while the bottom half is doing all the work, but lightning speed of movement my darling. It was focused and you told the story brilliantly.”

Will’s effort earned him a total score of 26 – the highest scoring quickstep on the opening show ever – and he now sits in sixth place.

Speaking after his performance Will said: “That was emotional. I gave it everything. I tried so hard. I fought so hard.”

Will and Janette – who have nicknamed themselves Team Pocket Racket – will be back on the dance floor next week. All scores from tonight’s show will be added to next week’s, and then the public will be asked to vote for their favourite.

If you missed Will’s performance, you can watch it on BBC iPlayer:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/b006m8dq/strictly-come-dancing>

Been inspired by Will Bayley?

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