



Platinum PIZAZZ

A DREAM WEDDING IN PALM DESERT IS A REALITY SHOW IN JUNE

BY THERESA MAGGIO PHOTOS: AARON DELESIE

How do you plan a dream wedding? Take an imaginative bride, an Olympic skiing groom and a whole cast of highly qualified vendors — oh, and make sure to get it all on film. Better yet, put the whole experience on national television for the second season of “Platinum Weddings” on WE tv. Well, that’s what bride, Leah Gordon, and groom, Toby Dawson, did to make their April 14 wedding at Bighorn Golf Club a memorable experience for all.

Scheduled to air in June 2007, “Platinum Weddings” follows the bride and groom throughout the days leading up to their wedding including interviews from the wedding planner, event designer and entire bridal party. Their focus is on the couple’s love story and how it translates into putting on the wedding of a lifetime.

How the fairytale started

An episode of “Platinum Weddings” captures Leah and Toby’s big day. Their relationship began as acquaintances and they later re-met during a physical therapy session where they became long-lasting companions. “We are friends first and foremost,” says Leah. “We have a great time together; we support and challenge each other to be better people.” She also shares about the wedding planning experience, “I’ve had a tremendous amount of fun planning — we both love hip hop music so hiring DJ Tony from Los Angeles was an absolute must!”

An unexpected gift

Planning the wedding took on additional emotions when Toby’s South Korean birth father was discovered. Toby was adopted at the age of 3 from an orphanage by American ski instructors Mike and Deborah Dawson of Colorado. The shy child grew into a fierce competitor on the slopes, earning himself a bronze medal at the 2006 Olympic Games in Torino. Toby’s international status took an overwhelming notice in his homeland of South Korea where a bevy of individuals claimed to be his birth relatives. Toby submitted DNA weeks before a scheduled trip as an honorary ambassador to South Korea. Two days prior to the trip, he was notified that they had found his father and a brother five years younger. A reunion took place at the airport surrounded by press, taking the news statewide, just six weeks before the wedding. The story also appeared on an episode of “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” which aired on March 27. With Leah by his side, Toby feels complete having unwrapped his past and is ready to



focus on his future as a husband and professional golfer; a new goal set for himself.

Finishing touches

In the weeks leading up to the wedding, the couple focused on preparing for their momentous occasion. Suddenly, it was rehearsal time and after practicing who stands where and does what, the two happily ran down the aisle giggling, excited and ready for the following day.

On the big day, the bridal party relaxed at Bighorn's Spa & Salon, while of course, being recorded on film. Preparations were being finalized by Wedding Coordinator Laurie Davies and Event Designer Keith J. Laverty along with Classic Party Rentals and Shine Lighting from Los Angeles. "The entire process has been a dream," shares Keith. "Leah has become like a sister to me making this experience a labor of love."

The moment arrives

Invitations to the ceremony were custom-produced on lucite and sent to guests in elegant boxes. The ceremony took place at one of the best-kept secrets in the desert, Bighorn's Canyons hole No. 2, which is complete with a dazzling waterfall surrounded by paradise. Only Bighorn members can request this lush location. Guests were transported in as a talented guitarist led the party down the aisle to contemporary romantic music. Then Leah arrived in a golf cart accompanied by her three children to roaring cheers from the guests. Her daughter Isabel, the flower girl, and her boys Thos and Colt walked her down the aisle. A truly joyous occasion, the two exchanged vows, kisses and drove off into the sunset as the crowd once again cheered and followed a bagpiper to the shuttles for part two of the extravaganza.

Time to party

Champagne, cocktails and a specialty drink called the "Awesome Dawsons" were served on an event lawn dotted with chic furnishings and trendy navy highboy tables. Guests knew they were in for a rare treat as they were escorted into the pavilion tent for the grand finale reception artfully prepared by Bighorn Executive Chef Jim McNeil.

Ooohs and ahhs filled the air as guests entered the tent lined with vibrant blue hydrangeas and soft flowing fabrics draped from top to bottom. Platinum pin cushion lincens dazzled as lucite chivari chairs sparkled like diamonds, accented by contemporary place settings and a gorgeous 12 dozen white tulip centerpiece perfectly pin-spotted. Incredible lampshade chandeliers hung as a stunning light show presented an incredible array of fireworks, changing the mood every few minutes. It was as if the guests had been transported to the trendiest, hippest New York restaurant and club.

Leah changed from her traditional gown into a fabulous white minidress matching Toby's crisp Gucci linens. The power couple made their toasts and began the first dance in a romantic embrace, cutting into a hip hop number allowing guests to join them on the pristine white dance floor. Soon the floor was hopping; young and old were dancing to '80s, '90s and current hits

in an updated hip hop fashion. The dancing only stopped briefly for a cake cutting, a multi-tiered golfer's bag — Toby's future career.

TUNE IN

See Leah and Toby's episode of "PLATINUM WEDDINGS" airing at 10 p.m. June 24 on WE tv as part of WE's "Bridal Block."

