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The Surprising Story Behind the *Dancing with the Stars* Mirrorball Trophy

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Celebrities show off their moves for the Mirrorball trophy, but how much is it worth?

It's one of the most coveted prizes on television, but *Dancing with the Stars'* Mirrorball Trophy actually comes from a quite humble beginning.

Based on the British reality competition *Strictly Come Dancing*, *DWTS* launched in 2005 with few expectations.

"With all due respect to the show, we didn't think it was going to last more than one season," *DWTS* production designer James Yarnell tells PEOPLE. "But we decided we wanted one that looked more like a trophy than the *Strictly Come Dancing* prize, which was basically a mirrorball on a stick."

So to upgrade the trophy, Yarnell and his team turned to an unconventional source material: a lamp.

"There was a limit to what I could spend, so I bought a 3-ft.-tall brass lamp, unscrewed it and took all the pieces apart. Then I reassembled some of the pieces to make basically what we can have today," says Yarnell. "The original one, the [Kelly Monaco](#) one, was literally part of a brass lamp and had it put on a wooden base with the mirrorball on it."

But the trophy wasn't camera-ready until a last-minute fix that occurred just before the premiere season's live finale.

"One of the execs from ABC thought the trophy was too short, so we literally unscrewed it and — probably 10 minutes before we went live — we added a roll of parcel tape between the stem and the base and that elevated it by 2 in.," says Yarnell. "We covered it in gold paper and off it went."

The trophy remained relatively the same until season 4 when it got an upgrade.

"They stopped making the lamp at Lamps Plus, so we'd run out of options and had to start casting it and put a heavy acrylic base with a brass stem," says Yarnell, who now commissions trophy bases from New York-based company Society Awards.

Will a second member of the Final Five be taking home a Mirrorball Trophy?

For the lettering that wraps around the mirrorball, Yarnell uses California Cinnabar Inc. The lettering has changed whenever the show's logo has changed and Yarnell is grateful the series now uses block lettering instead of the calligraphy it used in earlier seasons.

"The first year [Derek Hough](#) won, he lifted the trophy up and while he was shaking it and fist pumping it above his head, the D came off," Yarnell says of Hough's win in 2008 with [Brooke Burke-Charvet](#). "There's press photos of it saying 'ancing with the Stars!' But that was the logo and there wasn't a lot that we could do about it."

But despite all the changes, the mirrorball is the one aspect of the trophy that has stayed pretty much the same.

For the all-stars season in 2015 the mirrorball was painted gold and for season 20 crystals it was covered in Swarovski crystals, but "there's no such thing as a high-end mirrorball," explains Yarnell. "So no matter how much we put into the trophy, how much we spend, it always has a \$10 mirrorball on top."

"The trophy has been funny because it's one of those things that's kinda hokey but everyone loves it and gets excited when they see it," says Yarnell. "We have to keep our eye on it! I take it home with me in between seasons

and have it locked away because I don't trust it to be left anywhere else."

Dancing with the Stars airs Mondays (at 8 p.m. ET) on ABC.