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Bend runner, good Samaritan Mehra to appear on game show

BY DAVID JASPER • The Bulletin

Prior to one year ago, Rebecca Mehra, of Bend, was already well known from a track career at Stanford University and a professional runner for Oiselle, and an Olympic hopeful in the 800 and 1,500 meter races. Then she went viral, after tweeting about how she came to the aid of an elderly couple too scared to leave their vehicle in a Safeway parking lot as the COVID-19 curtain began descending a year ago, leading to all sorts of national attention.

At 8 p.m. Sunday, Mehra, 26, will compete as a contestant on NBC's "Ellen's Game of Games," comedian and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres' prime-time show featuring wacky games such as "Blindfolded Musical Chairs" and "You Bet Your Wife," along with new ones like "Name Dropper" and "Burst of Knowledge," invented for the show's in-progress fourth season.

Q. I'm curious what you've been up to over the past year, but of course want to talk to you about the show. ... You can't divulge the outcome, I'm sure.

A. I cannot, or else I will get in a lot of trouble, I think. But you'll see it (laughs).

Q. Could you tell me in your words about the show and what you did on there?

A. Yeah, it is, well, Ellen's game show. I think it kind of spurred from her kind of doing fun games on her show that then got adopted into a game show. Even in the pandemic — we were all tested and there was a lot of protocol — but it just kind of felt like a party when you're on set. Just really fun, lighthearted games. Of course, it meant something and it was a competition, but it was all for laughs, and kind of a nice opportunity to do something that feels good and is fun in this not-as-fun year we've had. (Games) are ... things like "Blindfolded Musical Chairs," where you have a blindfold on — actually, it looks like goggles with googly eyes on it — and you're doing a dance and you have to find a chair when the music stops.

Q. It sounds like you had fun.

A. Yeah, it was really an experience. It was a different experience than normal, I



Warner Brothers/NBC

Rebecca Mehra, of Bend, facing host Ellen DeGeneres, plays the game "Peaky Blindfolds" in the upcoming episode of "Ellen's Game of Games," airing Sunday on NBC.

think, given the pandemic. There was a quarantine hotel. ... I think I got COVID tested at least four times while I was there. And they don't let any of the folks who are there for the competition interact. I think part of it is game rules, like they want to prevent anyone from chatting with other folks about what the games are like, and then, too, of course, COVID and keeping everyone separate. So it was in some ways an odd experience. Typically, there's a studio audience, which there

wasn't, and you get to have a significant other or family members come and watch you, which was not the case this time (and would've been really fun).

Q. How did you come to be on the show?

A. Yeah, so back when we chatted in March, that story went completely viral. I ended up getting connected with some of the most powerful celebrities. I got retweeted by Oprah and Ellen, actually, and someone

from ("The Ellen DeGeneres Show") reached out to me. I ended up having a couple of conversations with them. They weren't really sure what they were doing with the show. This was before they'd even restarted doing things on set with testing. It was such an uncertain time ... (I) didn't end up going on the show, but the woman who interviewed me for the "Ellen" show recommended me for "Game of Games." So then I went through a separate try-out for the game show ... basically a series of mini games on Zoom. And then I got the callback. ... I found out I could be on the show, I think in July, and I think it was filmed at the end of August into early September.

Q. I assume you got to meet and interact with Ellen.

A. I did. I got to give her a hug, which was very cool and interesting.

Q. I'm curious how she came across, and if you paid any attention to the controversy. (Last year, reports emerged accusing "Ellen" of being a toxic workplace, leading to reduced viewership of her daytime talk show.)

A. A little bit, especially because that was happening right before I was expected to go to Los Angeles and film on her game show. I can only speak to my own experience, and she was very, very nice. She was on set the whole time. With COVID protocols, people were really getting cycled in and out very quickly, everyone's in intense PPE, except for the physical people who are getting filmed on set. ... In between takes, she was really friendly, having conversations with everyone, asking where everyone was from, if they were

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