

# 'THE APPRENTICE' Column

*with candidate Joanne Sweeney-Burke*



## **The Apprentice Week 4** **"You have to Lose to Win"**

This week I experienced my first loss on The Apprentice. The Bank of Ireland task involved both teams representing local food businesses and selling their produce in Bank of Ireland as part of Enterprise Week.

Team Zest and Team Spirit had to host and design a "Show Your Business" event in two of Bank of Ireland's largest commercial branches. Team Zest were

located in Eyre Square in Galway while my own Team Spirit went to Wexford Town. I was disappointed not to have been in Galway as I know the city pretty well having lived there for four years and being a frequent visitor now that I am married to a Galway man.

I was part of the branding, design and sales sub-team and though I believed I had utilised my skills well – it wasn't good enough. While our branding and our sales were complimented by the mystery shopper, we failed to create the buzz that our counterparts had in Eyre Square in Galway.

I was selling the fabulous Featherbed Farm Luxury Ice Cream range and of our €314 profit I sold €180 worth of stock for the Wexford-based producer. You could argue that selling ice-cream in the sunny south-east wasn't too difficult a task but I have to admit the product was an easy sell given its superb taste and quality.

Some nice comments this week from Irish Daily Mail columnist Fiona Looney who is hard to impress. *"Worryingly none of the women - with the exception of Joanne - looks likely to be in this for the long haul."*

Meanwhile, Jackie Lavin says, *"Joanne is looking stronger all the time. When the task was announced you could see her smiling. She was well inside her comfort zone, as she is with a lot of the tasks. She's also a responsible kind of person: married, a mother, settled. She's not just out of college with a marketing degree and thinks she's going to rule the world."*

It's great to know that despite being on a losing team that the critics see me as a viable candidate who knows what she's doing. So thanks ladies!

Experiencing my first loss was tough but with three wins in a row on my record, I was getting a bit anxious that I wouldn't learn too much from being consistently on a winning team. I was beginning to think to myself that I had to lose to win, that I had to fight my way out of the boardroom to see what Bill really thought of me.

Being on the losing team also meant that I got to have my first day off as winning means more cameras and less down-time. So my day off consisted of washing and ironing and a run. I like to run to relax – a bit of an oxymoron you could say – but running helps me unwind and get rid of the mental stress that builds up over each task.

I would religiously run about 30 laps of the garden three or four times a week and I found it exhilarating. It helped me focus on the task ahead but also wind down from the task just passed. It also helped me cope with missing home and in particular my husband and kids. Four weeks in and I was beginning to struggle with not being able to see them. While Sophie (15) understood my absence, my two-year old Bobby was very confused and upset so that was tough. And of course Tom had to manage everything at home on his own.

Project Manager Claire was the only other mum in the house and when she got fired I was upset as I knew that night she would get to hug her two year old son while I would have to suffer on. It was a battle I would have to cope with in my quest for success.

On entering the house the producers gave me some advice – *"you will*

*have to put all your energies into this process and just forget about your family. That is the only way you will cope."* It sounds harsh but at week four I was beginning to realise that I would either allow the anguish pull me down or channel those emotions into working harder. Guess which one I chose?

This week also saw the passing of my father-in-law Eddie Burke who lived to learn of my participation in the Irish Apprentice. While he didn't get to see any of the shows I know he was very proud of me and has made his own prediction about how far I will go. In fact our last conversation was about how *"I always come good"* and he agreed with me.

We will miss Eddie but I know his legacy of family values continues in my own house and for that I am very grateful. I dedicate this week's column to Eddie Burke who will now watch my progress from on high.

So with only 11 candidates remaining in the race to become Bill Cullen's business partner – it's all to play for. Tune in next Monday night to TV3 at 9:00pm to catch Episode 5 of The Apprentice 2011.

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*How far will she go?*

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