

Los Angeles Times CALENDAR weekend

WITH THE KIDS

It's all about getting big air

Gum-blowing champion Aina Cambridge shares some of her secrets.

By Brenda Rees
Special to The Times

June 9, 2005

This weekend, Dubble Bubble holds its sixth annual competition to find that one person in the United States who blows 'em big — chewing gum bubbles, that is.

The former titleholder, 11-year-old Aina Cambridge of Lakewood, competed with 1 million other contestants and won her crown and prize money back in 2003. She blew a whopping 21-incher that landed her a space in the finals in New York held live on the "Today" show.

In front of a television audience, Cambridge defeated the other blowers in the finals with a 14-inch bubble. That year, Cambridge rode high the bubble gum circuit, popping bubbles on television news and appearing in magazine articles.

So far, Cambridge is the only Californian ever to make it to the finals — which only adds to our reputation as a non-wisecracking, gum-smacking state. (And, really, who could compete with New Jersey?)

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She pops off about the secrets to her success:

Is blowing bubble gum merely a hobby or a way of life for you?

I never really thought about it until I discovered I could blow big ones. I've started to chew gum more after I won.

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Describe your training process for the contest.

I wasn't even ready for it. I was shopping with my grandma and she saw the contest. She kept bugging me about it, so I entered just to get her to be quiet. Now I'm very happy she made me do it.

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Your grandmother sounds like quite the lady.

She was the one who taught me how to blow bubbles in the first place.

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Preferred flavor?

Watermelon. I like the watermelon-grape combination.

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How many pieces do they allow you in the competition?

We could use three, but you want to use the regular flavor. When you use the flavored gums, it takes a long time to chew out the sugar.... You need to chew all the sugar out to make big bubbles. Sugar doesn't help bubbles.

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What about sugar-free gum?

I tried it. It didn't work for me.

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Ever blown a bubble so big it lifted you off the ground?

I wish.

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Complete this sentence: People who feel compelled to burst my bubble ...

Will hear me tell them, "Back off, I'm blowing here."

*

What does your dentist think about all this?

My dentist doesn't mind. I don't have any cavities. Well, maybe one.

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When is it rude to chew gum and blow bubbles?

When you're in a fancy restaurant.... You could end up with gum all over your face, and that wouldn't be good.

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Best method to get a popped bubble off your face?

My family usually helps me. In fact, I know I still have some gum stuck in my hair somewhere from [the 2003 competition].

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Have you ever been told to spit out your gum?

Yes, in school. And from my mom, when I'm popping it just to annoy her.

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Fess up: Do you mock kids with braces behind their backs?

No, not at all. I feel lucky that I can do what I can with gum.

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Any words of wisdom for competitors this weekend?

Keep blowing and don't stop.

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The Dubble Bubble National Contest for children 12 and younger, 11 a.m. on Saturday

at local Wal-Mart stores. www.dubblebubble.com.